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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



[A YEARNING HEART.]

TIME'S REVENGE; OR, FOILED AT THE LAST.

CHAPTER IX.

Heavy of heart she seems, and sore afflicted;
See with what sad and sober cheer she comes.
Alas! her gentle nature was not made
To buffet with adversity. Rowe.

TAKING firm hold of Fayette's hand, Miss Ibbotson pushed open the door. It was a large, antiquated, oblong room, running across the entire front of the house, with three lattice-paneled windows, and crowded with eighteenth century furniture, made for the most part of birchwood stained in imitation of ebony.

Sitting in a high-backed chair by the centre window was a tall, slim female figure. A woman apparently some five or six and thirty years of age, fair, tastefully if negligently dressed. Her face was worn, but the complexion, whether natural or "made beautiful for ever" by aid of cosmetics, was brilliantly fair, and she had a quantity of magnificent golden-brown hair, elaborately looped and plaited up.

This woman rose, without advancing, and supported herself by resting one white, well-modelled hand on an arm of the big chair. She looked at Fayette with a keen sweeping glance, and then stared full at Miss Ibbotson, with an expression indefinable.

"Margaret Lascelles, I think?" rang out Miss

Ibbotson's clear hard accents, returning the stare with compound interest.

"The same, at your service," was the dry response. "My daughter, I presume? Child, I am glad to see you. I hope you will forgive all my apparent coldness and neglect. Indeed, I could not help it."

This little formal speech was uttered in silvery tones, run over, as if conned beforehand like a lesson. Fayette tottered forward a few steps, then with a swift rush reached her mother and falling at her feet, seized her left hand and covered it with passionate kisses and tears.

Only those who have felt that dreadful inappetent hunger of the heart can understand the longing, the yearning of a sensitive young girl, orphaned, for a mother's love. Those who have liberty do not realise the anguish of slavery; those who bask in the sunlight can scarce comprehend the hardship of the miner's life; those who have health can hardly imagine what it is to lie on a bed of sickness and weep and pray for strength.

"My mother!" murmured Fayette, in a kind of rapture.

The black crest of that sin and shame hinted at by Aunt Prue melted away for an instant. Fayette, though she had always found Miss Ibbotson a true, an indulgent friend, felt her soul almost faint within her as she knelt at the feet of this mother, whom she had ever dreamt of as dead. This woman, who had not troubled herself for seventeen years to even learn the fate of her only child.

Miss Ibbotson had her eyes fixed, from some feeling she could scarcely define, on the nearly motionless figure of Fayette's mother. Without attempting to withdraw her hand,

Margaret Lascelles looked from side to side, a singular expression of mingled affright and disgust in her eyes. Then she looked down at the kneeling form, angel-like in its diaphanous white robes, and hastily snatching her hand away, sank into the chair and leaned back on the pillows heaped up in it.

"I am ill, weak," she muttered, catching the serene, frosty-grey eyes of Miss Ibbotson fixed upon her. "And this excitement kills me."

Fayette rose to her feet and stood before her, looking eagerly for some sign of love.

"Kiss me, child. I'm afraid you're very excitable. Heaven be praised these sensation scenes don't happen every day. I daresay we shall get on very well together; but I hope to heaven you—you are not horribly exacting. I abhor people who get up scenes."

Fayette bent, and pressed her lips to the cool, oval cheek of her mother. A chill as of death passed through her heart, and she shivered from head to foot from the pain of the sudden reaction. She might as well have kissed a waxen image for all response she met with.

"Sit down, my dear," said Margaret Lascelles. "Pray sit down, Miss Ibbotson. Please do not think, either of you, that I am cold and ungrateful because I do not say much. I must have a long talk with you, Charlotte."

"She does not know herself by that name," said Miss Ibbotson, roughly. "We have always called her Fayette."

"What an absurd cognomen. Why have you called her that?"

"It was a childish name given by her cousin B—cattie," answered Miss Ibbotson, stumbling

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over the last name, and flushing rose-pink on to the tip of her long, thin, arched nose, for she had tripped over a deeply painful subject before she was aware.

"Her cousin Beattie. Ah, yes. Of course. Hubert Allenby's daughter. How did they get acquainted?" asked Margaret Lascelles, in a harsh, sepulchral voice, unlike the soft, modulated accents in which she had previously spoken.

Miss Ibbotson looked helplessly at Fayette. Fayette looked back at her, feeling instinctively how awkward a turn the dialogue had taken.

"We have lived together all our lives," Fayette at last replied, in a subdued tone.

"What! I don't understand."

"It's a long story," Miss Ibbotson remarked, abruptly. "Hubert Allenby had to go away—why, you must have heard of it—his father was furious at his marriage. His wife died, and he could not take the child with him out to India, so begged my mother to take charge of her. He has ever since remitted twenty-five pounds every half year towards her maintenance."

"I—I had no idea of such a—a thing," almost gasped Margaret Lascelles. "And now—I mean I did not dream these girls were together." She muttered something to herself rapidly under her breath. "Hubert Allenby is a great man now," she continued. "His father dead—his brother dead—everything his. And this girl, this Beattie!"

"He is going to take her away. Fortunately for me, I am about to be married, so am thankful to have these two girls taken off my hands, though perhaps that is not a very gracious way of putting it. He has sent his uncle, as he could not come himself."

"His uncle—his uncle—what—oh, I remember. That Gerald. Oh—oh—yes, yes. Has he come? I always think of him as a boy. One forgets the lapse of time—especially when one feels and looks still young. So—Gerald Allenby has come?"

"He came to-day. I had notice only yesterday. Some people will let twenty years go by, without making a sign, at others want things all done in a hurry. Some people want everything to suit their own convenience. So, never mind what the cost may be to other people."

"Some people are so terribly selfish," sighed Margaret Lascelles, taking a vinaigrette from the window-ledge, where she had placed it for convenience, and sniffing sentimentally.

"Remarkably so. As for Beattie, I can't, and what's more, I won't let her go for a few days. I really cannot be left utterly alone at this juncture. It is most unreasonable to ask such a thing. Besides, I must get her dresses, and linen and things together, and packed. I haven't even got trunks and travelling bags handy, for we have been stay-at-home folks all the years of her life."

Margaret Lascelles did not appear to hear a word of this harangue. She drew her rather lip under her teeth, and pressed it till it became white. For a moment or two she remained silent, then she said, almost tranquilly:

"He has been obliged to go away again, then, this Gerald Allenby?"

"Oh dear no—not at all. People are not so obliging as to come and go as you want them, like some of your table-rapping spirits. He will take up his quarters here for a day or two."

Margaret Lascelles clutched the carved arms of the chair in which she reclined, and half glared at Miss Ibbotson.

"Here! What do you mean by here? Do you mean in this house?"

"My words were plain enough, I always speak plain if I can, and I only wish everybody would do the same. In my cleverest days, I never was clever at riddles. There is no other place for Mr. Allenby to remain at besides this place—the next nearest inn is in the town. I could not accommodate him, so I suggested this house as being convenient. Well, what are you going to do now? Shall I leave Fayette with you, or—or what? She may stay until evening, if you like. You will naturally have so much to

say to one another—so many little tender confidences to exchange."

Miss Prue's accent rendered these last words a caustic sarcasm, while her two grey eyes gleamed like a couple of new gimlets. Margaret Lascelles hesitated, and sighed pathetically.

"I—I am not very well," she alleged. "I do not feel equal to anything but solitude just now. I have been so accustomed for years to be alone. My heart is so tender, so susceptible. Alas, I feel things so deeply. Perhaps it will be as well for my daughter to—to—not to over-excite herself. Please come again in the morning. Charlotte. My foot is very painful, and makes me irritable."

Miss Ibbotson fancied Margaret Lascelles wanted to get rid of them. But she merely said:

"Very well. By twelve to-morrow, Fayette shall come by herself."

Fayette had said scarce a word since the failure of her filial kisses. She had seated herself, or rather subsided into the nearest chair, but she stood up now, calmly obedient, and waited silently, her looks utterly downcast, the rose tint again faded from her delicate face.

Ten years might have passed since yesterday, judging by her sensations. Margaret Lascelles held out her white, queenly hand to the young girl, with a smile of indescribable sweetness—a smile so exquisitely honeyed as to be simply detestable.

"Child—my daughter," she said, in those distinct tones of hers, "you must forgive me for sending you away so soon. Always," she added, in a lowered voice, as if speaking gently to herself, "you have much to forgive."

She spoke with her learned dano la voix—in tremulous accents. But the truthful, frank nature of Fayette revolted against the hollow tones. The mind of a young girl is always a mystery, even to herself.

It would have been impossible for the most skillful analyst to say what were Fayette's precise feelings at this moment. A cold terror and despair, mingled with keen self-reproach for being disappointed in her dreams, perhaps would best translate her sensations. She did not take the offered hand, but laid her trembling fingers on it.

"Farewell, my darling," said Margaret Lascelles, softly. "I grave not to be able to bear more of your company to-day. But you agitate me, and in the present state of my nerves, the least excitement might throw me into a low fever. For your sake, dearest, I must take care of myself."

The shy timidity of Fayette prevented her noticing one thing; that her mother's eyes never fairly and honestly met hers. Margaret Lascelles touched her lips to the girl's forehead, and smiled a languid adieu to Miss Ibbotson.

"Will you please come with this dear child to-morrow?" she asked. "I must seem so cold and ungrateful to you. I can hardly find words to express my gratitude."

Miss Ibbotson thought she had not spent much time in the search, but said nothing beyond "Come along, Fayette," adding to Margaret Lascelles:

"If you wish it, I'll come with her to-morrow. Good-morning."

"Good-morning. A thousand, thousand thanks," sighed Margaret Lascelles.

Her visitors went out. Fayette crushed back her tears, and crept down the narrow, dark staircase, much as a criminal might quit the dock after receiving sentence.

Gerald Allenby was in a tormenting state of inquisitiveness, but deemed it the best policy not to seem anxious to learn more than Miss Ibbotson might think proper to communicate. He rightly judged that in good time he should acquire such information as he might wish for.

He had accordingly disappeared. At that moment he was sitting very innocently in a picturesque grotto built on an elevated piece of ground at one side of the garden—smoking a

cigar, and idly contemplating the extended view over undulating meadows and grassy upland. Waiting, unconsciously, for the uplifted finger of Fate to beckon.

In the open air, Fayette felt better. As it was impossible to alter the existing state of things, Miss Ibbotson considered her most judicious line of conduct would be to simply take circumstances easily and lightly. But secretly her heart quailed within her.

"Poor child!" she said to herself. She did not quite understand and was incapable of sympathising with the ardent nature, the loving, tender heart of this girl of nineteen. But one need not be a bird to know that the clutch of a rough hand will injure delicate plumage, and bruise a poor little fragile body. "I could hit that woman. I used to think myself a cold brute, and have often scolded myself for abusing these girls. But—ugh! I always hated Margaret Lascelles, and now I wish—I don't know what I wish. I could skin her, with the greatest satisfaction to myself. What a world is it?"

Gerald Allenby saw the ladies come from the house into the porch, and throwing away his cigar, came to meet them.

"We shall be happy to see you at dinner-time," said Miss Ibbotson. "I hardly know how you will pass away the time meanwhile. They can let you have a horse, if you would care to ride. It is like a desert, this neighbourhood, for a stranger."

"I shall be all right," answered Mr. Allenby, pleasantly. "I am used to taking care of myself, and have plenty of resources. Think for your consideration, my dear madame. I shall be glad to accept your kind offer of hospitality."

"We dine at six," said Miss Ibbotson, making a gesture of farewell.

The ladies walked some way in silence, along the sunlit, hedge-lined road, a lovely walk for those whose spirits were attuned to enjoy it. But Nature is seldom kind, rarely sympathetic. The sunbeams creep through the closed blinds when we weep tears of blood for our dead—perhaps, for consolation, the cold rain pours down when we would rejoice and be glad.

The busy hum of insects, the lowing of the kine in the pasture, the mellow notes of the birds in the hedgerows, the gentle whispering of the soft summer wind through the leaves of the trees, seemed to breath of peace, of mild serenity.

Cheerful sounds came from every side. The bark of the sheep-dog, half jubilant, half defiant, the challenging or derisive crow of the cocks from the farm-yards, the insouciant, care-for-nobody whistle of the ploughboy as he plodded along—even these familiar, utterly commonplace echoes made a choral harmony of joy.

But very often we are hard upon Nature, and do not understand her when we think she does not understand us. This brightness, this melody, this gaiety may have meant, "There is a silver lining to every cloud." The possibilities of To-morrow never cease to exist. As the two downcast figures passed along in the summer sunshine, Fate lifted her finger for the scene to change.

CHAPTER X.

A DARING WOMAN.

Some bold smiles have in their hearts, I fear,
Millions of mischief. SHAKESPEARE.

There was nothing to be done at present but to wait, and Gerald Allenby did so as agreeably as adverse circumstances would permit. He gave himself generally a convenient character for laxness, and at this moment he would have made an excellent realistic study for the Barber's brother contemplating that famous basket of vitreous ware which came to such humiliating grief.

But Gerald Allenby had not now, nor ever had been happy enough to own, a basket containing a possible fortune to dream over. His history

was a peculiar one, and he winced under any allusion to it, as some writhed under some physical deformity. The grandfather of the present baronet had been an old, crotchety kind of man. Many people had confidently asserted that he had not been "right in his head." His wife, the mother of Sir Randal, had died a year or two after the birth of Sir Randal's youngest son.

Sir Randal had lived alone then, never on particularly friendly terms with his son or son's wife, never seeing their two boys. Suddenly, to the consternation of all who belonged to him, and the scandal of the whole county, he married a young woman, daughter of some old labourer on the estate. Why he did so no one could ever discover. He was not even deluded by the outward attraction of prettiness; the girl was desperately ugly, and had neither personal nor mental qualities to recommend her. Of course, everybody turned their backs on him and his wife for ever.

To make matters worse, the new Lady Allenby presented her husband with a son—Gerald. As the estates were unentailed the old man always meant to make a will, leaving his second wife and her son well provided for, but he procrastinated, as men are apt to do over this special task, and one day he fell ill with a virulent fever that was raging in the village; he never rallied, but died in delirium.

Sir Randal succeeded, taking, of course, all the estates as well as the title. If he had dared to brave public opinion he would have sent his father's widow and her boy packing off to the workhouse. The child was only twelve years old, and knew little more than an average ploughboy. He could ride like a centaur and whistle like a blackbird, but could hardly write his own name, and certainly could not read his prayer-book.

To save the credit of the family, Sir Randal proposed to give the widow five hundred pounds a year on condition that she should live in a part of the country as far distant from her old home as could be fixed on. There was no love lost between the widowed Lady Allenby and her stepson, so the grudging offer was accepted, a sharp solicitor conducting the affair on either side.

The widow lived in her new home very sparingly, saving every sixpence she could scrape together for her boy. She made no objection to Sir Randal's offer of sending him to school; painfully conscious of the defects in her early training, which could never be remedied, she was morbidly anxious to give her son every educational advantage.

She hoped her Gerald was clever, but was too ignorant to be able to judge of his natural abilities, or the degree of progress he might be making under the direction of those who "taught" him. For good or for ill, she was not allowed to see his first start in the race of life, for she died when he was only eighteen.

Sir Randal was lazy, ill-tempered, and mean, with a petty jealousy of disposition which filled him with small spite against all who possessed the slightest advantage over himself. He could not bear that even his sons should know more than himself, or be better educated or have superior intellectual attainments. The two boys were sent to school, but he never showed the least interest in their studies or amusements, never encouraged them by the faintest breath of commendation, always, on the contrary, throwing cold water on any occupation they might appear to like.

On the death of Gerald's mother he permitted the youth to take up his quarters at Altenham, the old home, with treatment the same as that accorded to Alexander and Hubert. The old fellow hated the three boys, and, as might naturally be supposed, the reciprocity was not altogether on one side. His sons were not bad specimens of their kind, but they were spoilt as surely as ever a mother's darlings were.

Their mother hardly ever noticed them. Her only clearly-developed idea was an intense, all-absorbing love for herself, which embraced the notion that she suffered from feeble health. Her feeble health meant the worst form of laziness,

but she euphemistically named it delicacy of constitution, talked languidly of the weakness of her nervous system, and coddled as only lazy and selfish women can endure to coddle.

The boys, having nothing else to do, fell into mischief. Gerald was the first. Sir Randal flew into a tornado of passion, swore he must be got rid of, and then, toning down to a cold rage, descended to ask him what he would like to do. Gerald had a strong prejudice against doing anything—said he had no choice—as Sir Randal suggested emigration, at that period a magic refuge for every ne'er-do-well, and offered to give him five thousand pounds if he would go away and be so obliging as never to let himself be heard of more.

Gerald took the money and went away, not to lose himself in American or Australian wilds, but in the more congenial wildernesses of Paris. Having squandered the greater part of his small donation, he wended his way to London, where he not only scattered the remainder, but drifted into the claws of the Jew money-lenders. After that he was compelled to brace up his energies. He was smart enough to obtain employment as an article writer for some of the daily papers. He dared not face his half-brother again.

Alexander was the next. He allowed Margaret Lascelles, his mother's young companion, to make a dead set at him, and when his father stormed about it, forbidding him to marry or make love to that person, he ran away and encouraged her to run after him.

Hubert was the last. He chose to marry the elder daughter of Mrs. Ibbotson, a woman not only in position some degrees inferior to the Allenbys, but one against whom Sir Randal cherished an old grudge. The old man wrote a furious letter to Hubert, breaking off all further connection with him.

Some friend, out of pity, got an appointment in India for Hubert, and he went out, taking his wife with him, leaving his infant daughter Beatrice in the charge of Miss Ibbotson. There had been an elder child, but one unhappy day it had fallen over the rocks into the sea, nothing but a tiny shoe remaining on the sands to reveal its fate.

Hubert and his wife had remained in India some years, then the wife died. Then Lady Allenby died, then Sir Randal, and last of all news came that Alex was dead, who had died the day before his father. So it came to pass that Hubert was now lord of Altenham, with estates not only unencumbered, but largely enriched by the last two owners. Sir Randal had made a will—a rather perplexing one—leaving his successors to reap all the troubles he had sown.

Gerald had sought out Hubert when he heard the latest news. Hubert and he had in earlier years been moderately good friends and comrades, and now Hubert was glad to welcome a familiar face, thankful for any help in business matters, his health being so bad. Just at present Gerald was domiciled at Altenham, and by degrees was gaining a powerful influence over his nephew.

He was filled with gall and bitterness when he found Sir Randal had left him only a paltry couple of thousand pounds. He felt how differently ordered things might have been had Alex and Hubert both died before Sir Randal. He would have been the only heir in existence, and the girl, Beatrice, would probably have been portioned off with a handsome dowry.

To-day Gerald Allenby was meditating over affairs in general. Idly watching the thin, blue, spiral cloud of cigar smoke, he was, with some bitterness of spirit, thinking. If Beattie even had not been born, or had died—nay, if she were to die now—how different might his position have been, how changed it might yet be! She was not likely to die, however. She looked as strong nearly as a ploughboy and as alert as Atalanta, her affectionate uncle thought, with a savage grimace.

It was not want of inclination that prevented the worthy gentleman from carrying off Miss Allenby and shutting her up in a gruesome Castle of Despair till she died of melancholy madness, or tipping her over a cliff, or giving her

a poisoned bouquet to sniff at, or plotting to have her flung from a rampant steed. But it was easier to picture melodramatic enormities than to conjure up means of putting them into execution.

It was certainly a thousand pities Fayette was not the one to be dealt with. She looked the kind of girl to fall a victim to, say, a blighted affection, and so drift into a rapid consumption, or something handy of that sort, which would be as good as a sensational enormity, without the risk. Besides, she looked naturally delicate, with her pinky colour, the hue of a blush rose on the inside of a sea-shell; and her luminous violet eyes, which told of a sensitive spirit within a fragile body.

But he had not to deal with Fayette. She was outside his world altogether, so it was really no use wasting thought and energy on imaginary fancies. The sober thump, thump of approaching footsteps made him raise his eyes, without altering his languid, reclining attitude. His thoughts came back instantly from the world of dreams to existing, tame reality. Sarah, the general factotum of the place, appeared, making respectful dips from the moment she hove in sight, and pulling at her apron.

"Please, sir, the lady upstairs sends her complements, and could you, please—she'd be glad to speak to you, sir, if you don't mind."

"The lady? The one I came with—I mean Miss Ibbotson?" inquired Gerald Allenby.

"Oh, no, sir! She's been gone for this ever so long, at least about a quarter of an hour. Not her, please, sir, but the other lady," explained Sarah, shifting uneasily from one foot to the other, rumpling up her apron, and obviously anxious to escape.

"The young lady? The one with the golden hair?"

"Oh, no, sir! The one who came last night. I don't know her name, but she hurted her foot, sir. The one as the ladies come to see, sir," replied Sarah.

"Wants to speak to me? There must be some mistake."

Then it occurred to him that possibly he might be on the point of unearthing the mystery which Miss Ibbotson had evidently not much cared he should learn. Who was this mysterious female? Who was Fayette? The name of Lascelles had not recalled any past recollections, for Alexander Allenby's ladylove had come to Altenham only a few months before he was himself expelled, and he knew next to nothing about her then, while she had entirely passed from his mind since. As a rule, Gerald Allenby felt the most supreme indifference to all and every subject and person that did not immediately concern himself, but this message roused a languid curiosity within his mind.

"Say I shall be with her in one moment," he said to the girl.

Sarah lumbered off, glad to escape. Gerald Allenby trotted into the parlour, and adjusted his hair, beard, and necktie before a black-framed convex mirror, hung at any number of angles above the old-fashioned black chimney-piece.

On being left alone by her visitors, Margaret Lascelles had sat perfectly still for about five minutes, her elbow on the arm of the chair, her face full of dark reflectiveness, almost biting her nails in her brooding humour.

"Fortune might as well have given me a bullock to fight with as that girl," she muttered. "She seems frightfully gushing, the sort of girl who wants you to be fond of her, and to pet and make much of her. Pious too, I'll be bound. I hate gush. The worst of it is, she will most likely fall ill and be a worry to me, if I don't respond, at all events, a little to her effusiveness. I see it in her face, in her eyes. But perhaps it is best as it is. She is angelically handsome, I must say that, and she is just that interesting kind of creature calculated to enlist the world's sympathies. Nothing goes down so well as this lily-like, babyish Ophelia style of young woman. Even women admire it. Perhaps it is best as it is, and she won't be so likely to be self-willed, or want to know too much. A little romance

and a little flummery will make goodies and sweets to keep her well satisfied."

According to her habit when excited she rose, and was about to pace slowly to and fro. But the moment she stood up the pain in her ankle reminded her of the helpless condition to which her unlucky accident had reduced her, and she sank back again among the pile of snow white pillows—something that sounded much like a wild execration breaking from her lips.

"Pleasant! Well, if I am chained here, so is Gerald Allenby, it appears, and this will give me an excuse for lingering. There could not be a better opportunity, and it will save my having to seek him. I wonder if he's much altered? I hardly remember what he was like; it must be nearly twenty years ago since he was at that place. I wonder if he is in the house? No time like the present, as my old governess used to say."

With a sharp, impatient hand, she touched a bell placed on the table close by her side. The heavy step of Sarah was heard lumbering upstairs, and a few moments after her gawky, countrified figure blocked up the doorway, looking like a peasant girl by Rembrandt, painted on a dark background, framed in old oak.

"Mem?"

"A gentleman came in with the two ladies, I think?" said Margaret Lascelles, in her slavey accents.

"Yes, 'm'"

"I forgot something I wanted to say to them, and I think he is to see them this evening. I should like to ask him if he would take a message from me. Is he in the house still, or did he go away with them? It does not much signify, only I should like my friends to know."

Lying back so grand, so indolent, so perfectly cool and tranquil, one graceful hand slightly raised as she rested her elbow on the arm of the chair, the other lying half concealed among the folds of her dark silk dress, she looked like an ideal duchess.

"He's in the grotto, 'm, I think. I see him go in there. Shall I tell him, mem?"

"Thanks—if you will."

Sarah closed the door, and lumbered down again. Margaret Lascelles lay almost as if carved in marble, just turning her head so as to look from the open window, gazing at the clear, limpid azure sky, inhaling the delicious scent from the clover meadows.

The girl had carried her errand faithfully, and in a short time—though the minutes seemed long indeed to the expectant woman sitting waiting by the window—the graceful figure of her invited visitor appeared in the oak-framed door. This time it was a courtly picture by Vandyck or Rubens.

For a few moments, Gerald Allenby stood on the threshold of the door, looking with curiosity and fixed attention at the beautiful figure by the open window, against its sunny background of azure. Margaret Lascelles leaned slightly forward, an expectant expression on the face so cold to her child.

In spite of her seven or eight and thirty years, she was still a very lovely woman, and knew how to use every charm, every attraction, to the highest advantage. Of large and varied experience, she knew well—none better—that the surest way to secure a man's interest and attention, and throw him off his guard, was to strike his imagination as being a handsome and clever woman, and to pique his curiosity.

"Mr. Gerald Allenby?" she smilingly said, half holding out her slender white hand, with a Marie Stuart in exile sort of air.

The action was touching, the hand beautiful and in itself an appeal.

Gerald bowed, and then advanced, still gazing, almost as if spell-bound, upon the face of the mysterious woman who had thus strangely sought his acquaintance. It was an oval face—though not a pure, perfect oval, with an eager "soul of flame in a body of gauze" kind of look.

Thin straight brows over deep-set eyes—those eyes that magnetise your attention, spite of yourself. A straight, well-formed, but rather large nose. Thin, straight, blood-red lips. A

firm, square-cut chin. A remarkable face, that puzzled, charmed, attracted, repelled you.

The face of a woman who had had many admirers, and not one true, real lover; who had made innumerable acquaintances, and never one friend. The face of a disappointed, embittered woman, who yet would not own herself defeated.

Gerald Allenby was not in the least spell-bound, though he was much interested for the moment, and experienced some of the glamour which these women of the Marie Stuart or Elizabeth Tudor type desire to throw over all male animals who approach them.

"You must have pity for a poor invalid," Margaret Lascelles continued, smiling. "I am unable to rise to receive you—"

"A queen need never rise to receive her subjects, madame," answered Gerald Allenby, wondering to himself, and saying the first nonsense that came into his head.

"Neatly turned. But, alas, I am no queen—only a poor woman in need of—of almost everything," she sighed. "I must excuse myself for this room—for everything. Will you be good enough to seat yourself just there. May I ask if I trespass on your time?"

"I am only too glad to be rid of an hour or so, madame."

"You speak French of course?"

Gerald Allenby drew one of the quaint old chairs to the spot she had indicated, and seated himself as she had desired.

"Do I speak French?" he repeated, more as if trying to fathom her reason for asking such an abrupt question than as if thinking of the inquiry itself. "I do—as well as an average Stratford-at-Bow Englishman can."

He was marvelling to himself if she might be a madwoman. What the dickens did she want? If not mad, did she imagine him to be a rich man, and mean begging, or anything unpleasant of that sort?

(To be Continued.)

PRESS ON.

No idle skulking hearts or hands
Shall gather in the band
Of honest workers strong and true
Throughout our native land.

Work with a will, have courage still
To brave misfortune's spell,
Do what is right and ne'er despair,
If it's done slow and well.

Detect the might which conquers
right,
Let this be still your lay,
The world is wide, whate'er betide,
Press on and gain the day.

Let none gainsay our right to tell
Our wants in words aloud,
Our English freedom to speak out,
Of which we all are proud,

Shall not be curbed or be disturbed,
By faction or by foe;
We will maintain, and not in vain,
This right where'er we go.

In accents strong denounce the wrong,
Let this still be your lay,
The world is wide, whate'er betide,
Press on and gain the day. O. P.

SCIENCE.

THE boomerang, that curious weapon of the natives of Australia, which is used as a missile, and possesses the remarkable property of returning through the air towards the thrower, has often been studied with a view of explaining this singular action. Mons. Desiré Charny, a

French traveller, thinks that the eucalyptus leaf first suggested the form of the boomerang to the savages, and that the return movement is due not only to the shape of the weapon, but to a motion of rotation communicated to it in the act of throwing.

THE earlier pictures by Sir Edwin Landseer are in better preservation than his later works; and a contemporary speaking upon what it deems the highest authority, says that they were painted with cold drawn linseed oil and turpentine, without any sort of varnish. Within a few years, a good deal of scientific study has been devoted to the materials employed in painting, notably by Dr. Liebrick, who has published some papers on the subject, and still continues to give it attention.

A COMPARISON of the geological specimens brought home from the Arctic regions last year by Captain A. H. Markham, with those previously collected by the British North Polar expedition under Sir George Nares, indicates that the greater part of the region about the North Pole is composed of carboniferous rocks, and that a large area of coal measures probably underlies the Polar Sea north of Spitzbergen and Franz-Josef Land.

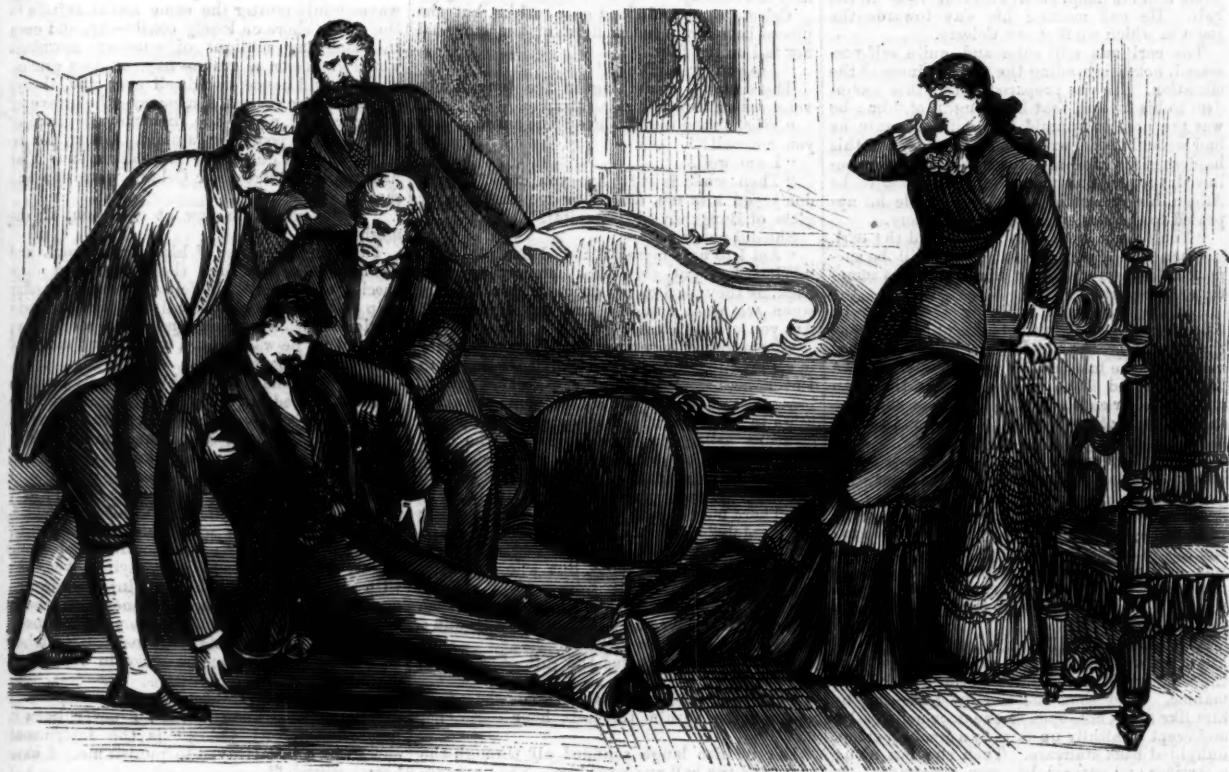
THERE has long been some doubt as to whether the Lukuga river, on the west side of the great Tanganyika Lake in Africa, was an outlet of the lake or an affluent. This question is finally settled by a letter from a member of the London Missionary Society, who saw the river in April and found it to be a large stream flowing with great swiftness westward out of the lake.

ONE hundred and three weather observatories are now maintained in India by the British government, besides several in Ceylon and one on the Persian Gulf.

DR. OTTO FINSCH, a German naturalist, who became well-known in Europe by his explorations in Siberia four years ago, is now engaged in a similar expedition to those islands of the North Pacific ocean whose natural history has been least studied. He is aided in this work by a grant from the Berlin Academy of Sciences. On his way out he stopped at Honolulu, and was surprised there to find how extensively the native Sandwich Island birds had been supplanted by species introduced from foreign countries. A species of starling from China, turtle-doves from the same region, and the European house sparrow, were the only birds he saw during his stay of a week at the capital, and it was only far inland that he succeeded in finding any native species. Even in the interior they are scarce and fast dying out.

THE inquiry into the bursting of the thirty-eight ton gun on the iron-clad "Thunderer," has drawn attention to the difficulty of knowing whether a gun has actually been fired or not in the heat of an engagement. As war vessels are now constructed, the muzzle is generally out of view, and where practice is going on with a number of guns at once, it is difficult to ascertain whether a particular gun was in fact discharged or not, unless the splash of the shot happen to be seen when it strikes the water. There is now no doubt that the great cannon on the "Thunderer" was really loaded with a double charge, but to make sure of this, the Government has sacrificed another gun of equal size and value. This was taken from the turret of the same ship, and fired with just such a double charge as was supposed to have caused the destruction of the other. The result is described as a precise reproduction of the "Thunderer" accident. Though costly, the experiment seems to be deemed satisfactory.

IN China rank is expressed by the size of the visiting card. When our representative had occasion to visit Pekin as the representative of the British Government, a number of servants carried a big bundle into his reception-room, which, when unrolled, covered nearly the whole floor of the large chamber; it was the visiting card of the Chinese Emperor.



[RETRIBUTION.]

AILEEN'S LOVE STORY.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"Christine's Revenge; or, O'Hara's Wife,"
"The Mystery of His Love," &c., &c.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A TRAGEDY.

No seas could wash away that stain
On that guilty hand of mine;
Then let my head be bowed in shame,
And a prison cell be mine.

"You bring me news of him?" Celeste cried, and she clasped her hands and lifted them up imploringly, as if she were uttering a prayer. "Tell me, is he ill? Has anything happened to him? Tell me quick, for the love of Heaven!"

"Calm yourself, dear young lady."

The earl was looking now on the witching, weird beauty of the face with its frame of dark hair and all its exquisite finish of pencilled eyebrows, long sweep of lashes, and delicately curved nostril. She was, he believed, his child, his beguiled, unhappy child.

What a wretch was this selfish noble who had blighted the youth and tainted the name of this breathing picture, this incarnate poem, this creature who would have graced the stately drawing-rooms in the proudest kingdoms under the sun.

"How can I calm myself?" asked Celeste, "until I know what is the matter with Lord Athlone?"

"Nothing is the matter with him bodily. He is well and strong and in safety. Nevertheless, I bring you news of him, but I must have a private interview with you."

Servants were moving about in the hall, and opening and shutting doors as the earl spoke,

and Celeste took him at once towards a room at the further end of a corridor leading out of the hall on the left. This room was furnished in exquisite chintz. Against the walls hung some valuable old engravings. An ancient carven oak cabinet was loaded with quaint, costly china. The French window was closed. A lamp hung from the ceiling. Celeste drew the curtains before this window, closed the door, pointed to a seat, and then said:

"Do not keep me in suspense. Tell me what you have to tell me in pity, for I am suffering tortures—yes, I have not an atom of patience in me. Tell me, tell me quickly!"

"Lord Athlone is false to you; he is a scoundrel who makes an idol of a woman for a few months, and then casts her adrift on the world! And, my poor child, he will so treat you unless you leave him first. Don't stare so at me. I have perhaps a greater right to interfere in this matter than you think of, or can guess. I hate the man for the wrong he has done you. I—"

Celeste interrupted him.

"If you mean the wrong of bringing me here, and teaching me to lead the life I lead, I don't mean to listen to you. I am not a good woman; I am a daughter of Eve, and I love Athlone with my whole heart. I would not leave him if all the wise men and pious women in England came here in sack-cloth and ashes and knelt and prayed me to lead what is called 'a better life!' You," with a curl of the lip, "have the look of one of those good men. I am not good; I hate good people!"

"Unhappy child. But if you have no love for what is right, you might, at least, resent a wrong done to yourself. Lord Athlone, at this moment, keeps two other establishments similar to Heatherwood, though both are near town—one at Richmond, another in St. John's Wood. In each of these miserable homes, with their guilty grandeur and splendid sin, there reigns, poor child, a woman to whom the false lord swears the same false vows he swears to you!"

Celeste had grown white as death. She

actually ground her teeth in her mad rage; she clenched her hands; she came close to the earl, and she hissed out the words:

"Their names—tell me their names?"

"One is called Mademoiselle Dijon. She is a French ballet-girl, and her dwelling is at Richmond. The other is called 'Alicia'; you may have heard of the cream-coloured horses this woman drives."

"Stop!" cried Celeste, "I cannot bear this. A thousand memories crowd into my soul and show me that what you say is true. Now I can understand to whom belonged the lock of golden hair which I found in a locket set with emeralds in his drawer. The name Alicia was on the other side in a monogram, and when I asked him of it, he said hair and locket were the gift of a cousin of his who died at the age of fourteen when he was a lad of twelve. Then one day I found an envelope in his pocket directed to Mademoiselle Dijon, as if he had been interrupted in writing the address, and this was, so the false knave told me, the name of a woman who sold gloves and cigars in the Strand. Ah, wait till he comes here, and I will be avenged—yes, avenged!"

The white even teeth were close shut, and the words were hissed from between them. The face of Celeste had become white as the face of a corpse. Lord Llandudno became affrighted at the demon which with the best and purest intentions he had aroused in this woman's soul.

He had come there as a pious man or a minister of religion might have come to tell her to flee from what he would have called her splendid shame, and to lead the pure, exalted life of a true-hearted woman, and now only vengeance—ay, and the shadow of something deadlier yet lurked in the girl's fathomless eyes.

While he would have expostulated, entreated, explained, he was cut short in the most sudden manner. There came a loud ring at the door. The servants had closed that door since the entrance of the earl; they opened it now, and

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then the earl heard the footsteps of the young noble and his loud, clear, cheerful voice in the hall. He was making his way towards the room in which we first saw Celeste.

The earl was still calm and quite self-possessed, notwithstanding the awkwardness of the situation. He was prepared to tell this scoundrel to his face all that he thought of him; he was prepared to upbraid him with the ruin he had wrought, the wreck he had made of this hapless girl's life—this girl whom he firmly believed, though on such slight evidence, to be Aileen, his own child. And meanwhile he appealed to the beautiful Celeste once more.

"You do not know who I am," said the earl. "When I tell you my name you will be surprised, and you may even think you have something to resent."

For the earl, still believing Celeste to be Aileen, supposed that she had heard of him as the false lover, not the faithful husband, of her mother, as he had been in reality, and he even then hesitated if he should tell her the truth and claim her as his child, all lost as she was, in the hope of reclaiming her from the evil through glittering his she was leading.

But while he spoke he saw that Celeste heard him not. Her face was still white; her eyes seemed sunk in her head; her low, sombre forehead, where the dark fringe of hair met the pencilled eyebrows, assumed a sullen ferocity; the lips were close shut; the whole countenance was changed—changed hideously. It was as though an evil spirit had entered the human temple. All the beauty of the young woman seemed blotted out.

A great horror filled the earl's soul. He knew not what he dreaded, unless it were that the jealousy of this creature had turned her into a maniac. And then she slid by him—slid by him like a serpent, opened the door noiselessly, and crept stealthily upstairs by a crooked, steep, unlighted back staircase. Then she ran along a corridor and entered her own apartment. It was a room replete with luxury and comfort.

Though the furniture was heavy and antique, it was massive and richly carved. The carpet was velvet pile; the hangings and upholstery of crimson silk; the bedstead was of rosewood inlaid most curiously with mother-of-pearl.

Celeste went and lifted up the satin quilt and the soft hair mattresses, and from between them and the palliase she drew out something. It was not much to look at, only a sheath of ebony inlaid with silver, but she walked up to the dressing-table, an antique one of curiously carved rosewood, and she went close to the oval mirror, on each side of which were wax candles alight, and then she drew out of the sheath a sharply-pointed, glittering dagger.

She set her teeth and grinned when she saw it. Her face was as the face of one transformed and demon-possessed. And then she slipped the murderous instrument up her sleeve and rushed swiftly and stealthily down the stairs, and in that same fashion she crossed the hall and entered the long antique room in which we first saw her.

Lord Athlone was lounging back in an arm-chair. He had desired the servants to bring him wine and biscuits. A great silver claret jug stood on the table close to where he lounged. There were a couple of tall thin glasses and an exquisite china plate, on which were some dainty biscuits.

There was a great crystal basket filled with camellias, the rarest and richest in tint. It was a study for a genre painter: the handsome, graceful man in his careless yet perfect costume, his head lying back against the silken cushions, the flowers, the silver, the crystal, the antique furniture, the picture-panelled walls, and the woman slender, stealthy, with pale face and dark hair, and eyes that seemed blind to all that surrounded her, eyes sunken and sinister, whose beauty was quenched, whose light was dimmed. Lord Athlone did not even rise to meet Celeste when she approached him. If he had been asked to do so he would have replied that "he was tired by the awful journey in the train."

"Well, my Queen of Spring, I am tired to

death. Come and kiss me, honey; I am too lazy to stand up."

Celeste came and stood near to him, but she placed herself where the light of the lamp did not fall on her face.

"Are you tired, Dick?"

There was a something in the tone of her voice which struck him as strange.

"What is the matter, love?" he asked. "Are you not well?"

"I am well."

"Then what is it? Are you cross? Why don't you kiss me, and pour me out another glass of Burgundy; it is capital!"

She did not stir.

"Am I to help myself?" asked Lord Athlone. "What has put the black monkey on your back, as they used to say to us in the nursery when we were naughty and out of temper? Are you cross, Celeste?"

"I am in better temper than I ever was in—in all my life. I have been happier to-day than I ever was before. I think you are the truest, bravest gentleman under the sun: I alone reign in your heart? Yes, yes, there is not a creature called Mademoiselle Dijon who lives at Richmond; there is not another wretch called Alicia who lives in St. John's Wood!"

Lord Athlone laughed a low mocking laugh.

"There may be a thousand such people living at St. John's Wood, and at Richmond—most likely there are. It would never enter my head to doubt it myself. But who has been telling you all this?"

"And I found a golden locket chased with emeralds, in which was a lock of fair hair and a monogram of the word Alicia!"

"Yes, I told you it was the gift of a cousin who is dead."

"Who is dead?" Celeste repeated. "dead, as you will be within the next hour! Ha, ha, ha!"

Her maniac laugh sounded all through the room and the hall and corridors. The next moment it was followed by the appalling shrieks of a murdered man, and mingling with the impotent anguish of those cries, the startled wail, the horrible surprise, and deadly fear that made them ear-haunting echoes for long months to those who listened to them; mingling with those awful cries were the maniac peals of satanic laughter which the miserable murderer uttered.

There came hurrying to the spot numbers of men-servants, women-servants, and the Earl of Llandudno, who had been the unfortunate means of driving Celeste to this atrocious crime. He stood stock still; the room appeared to him filled with mist, and the sound as of a hundred voices, so that it seemed to him that he was in the throes of some mystical and hideous dream. And then the mists cleared, and the earl saw a horrible sight—Lord Athlone supported in the arms of two of his servants, his face white with the hue of coming death, blood streaming from his chest, his shirt front red, and soaking with the life stream, an awful, unutterable look upon his face, as if all at once his eyes were opened to the wickedness of his past life, as if the affrighted soul paused on the brink of that dark river which was so soon to engulf it and bear it to the unknown shore.

At a little distance stood Celeste, her white dress red with the blood of the man whom she so madly loved and had sacrificed to her deadly jealousy. The woman did not attempt to escape; the dagger lay at her feet. She was literally red-handed, but who shall paint the ghastly despair, the stony look in the sunken eyes?

Within the last hour the beautiful face had aged ten years. The unhappy earl looked upon her as his daughter—his daughter whom in trying to lead to a pure and noble life, he had unwillingly incited to become a murderer. He wished that the earth would swallow her up, where she stood—young, beautiful, a murderer. That horrible word would henceforth for him chime ever on the iron tongues of ten thousand bells throughout the realm; the winds of Heaven would shriek out the word, as they rushed across the midnight skies; when the

trees of the forest whispered they would hiss out the same hateful syllables; the booming waves would mutter the same awful refrain to the sultry shore on lonely coasts—ay, and even the laughing sunlight of summer mornings would glance on a grave—nay, on two graves, which would henceforth dwell ever and always in the unhappy man's memory—the grave of the murdered noble, the dismoured grave of his child, his poor Mary's child, Aileen, for he falsely fancied during all this bitter time that Aileen and the wretched Celeste were one and same.

"If she could die now at once—oh, if she might die!"

This was the prayer of his agonized soul, and meanwhile he watched the dying man in a species of stupor. He felt powerless to offer help or explanation, and all the time he was burdened with a horrible sense of responsibility; he felt that he was guilty, though innocent, of what had happened.

Lord Athlone was stabbed nearly to the heart. He had not many minutes to live; the nearest surgeon lived a mile from the house; a servant, indeed, was despatched on horseback to fetch him, but everybody knew that before he could even receive the message the life of the unhappy nobleman would have ebbed away. Everyone watched his face—his handsome, cynical, clever face, which men had admired and women had worshipped for its aristocratic beauty and intellectual form, dying—yes, and with such a strange, wild yearning look in the eyes as made the beholders—none of whom save Celeste had loved him—weep for him tears of mingled pity and anger against the wretched murderer. All at once he spoke in weak, low, distinct tones.

"I am dying! Hold me up—up—there I—I deserve this. I know it now; I never knew it before—that girl Celeste is the instrument chosen by a just Heaven to punish me. I have been a wretch!"

Lord Llandudno crossed over to the dying man and whispered in his ear these words.

"My lord, is not yonder unhappy girl Aileen—she who calls herself Celeste? Answer me, I implore you; satisfy me on this point, and you will do a good action."

Athlone looked at him in amaze.

"Aileen was good; she escaped me; but Heaven knows where she is, poor, good child. Yonder Celeste, her real name is Susanna Lotti; her father is Spanish, her mother Irish. She has a violent temper; was a ballet dancer, quarreled with the manager, and went to dance to an organ-grinder's tunes in the street. Poor child, I hope they will not hang her."

Surely in every human heart there lurks some seeds of good grown over by ill weeds trampled on by the spirits of evil which blossom forth into evil actions, but yet only waiting their time to spring up into life? A feeble life it may be, but still verdant as are all plants, the seeds of which are transplanted from paradise. Forgive the metaphor, reader; we would say, if we knew how, that even this bad man had after all enough of the divine in him to enable him to die forgiving his murderer. As for Lord Llandudno, a great and deep thankfulness filled his heart when he found that the wretched Celeste was not his child.

Though the said child were lost to him forever, even that were better than to have found in her only a miserable maniac whom jealous and guilty love had transformed into a murderer!

CHAPTER XXIX

CONCLUSION.

For in the name of wife,
And all the bliss that name can give,
Are clasped the moral of my life,
And that for which I care to live.

CLESTE had been silent since those hideous shrieks of laughter which she had uttered; but now all at once she found voice. She rushed towards the dying Athlone, knelt by

his side, and looked into his eyes, already glazing.

"Athlone, my love, you are dying. I have killed you, and they will hang me. That will be the end of *Susannah Lotti*, who never loved mortal since she saw the light of day save yourself, and who has killed you. It was because I was determined to punish those two others who dared to pretend to love you in exchange for the diamonds, the dresses, and the dinners you gave them. I would have starved in a garret and called it bliss if you were there and had loved me. You were all—your love was all I craved for. I never had it, never."

Lord Athlone spoke three words, "I forgive you," then his head fell back on the shoulder of the servant who held him. When the doctor arrived all that remained of Lord Athlone was a stiffened corpse. *Celeste* was a raving lunatic. She was put under medical restraint next day, for when the doctor arrived he telegraphed to the heads of a criminal lunatic asylum, and the unhappy creature was removed there at once. We do not wish to speak again of this wretched life, so let us briefly explain that competent medical authorities pronounced her to be a confirmed lunatic. She was indeed tried for the murder of Lord Athlone, but she was not allowed to appear in court, and she was condemned to perpetual imprisonment, but she died within three months raving mad.

Aileen has come back from the land of wild dreams and fantastic shadows, back from the scorching land of fever, where the atmosphere alternates between a lurid light and an Egyptian gloom. Now she is calm and wise, as those are wise who have suffered. She felt the gentle influence of care and kindness, and she knew that once, not so very long ago, she had been rash and impatient in her sorrows, and had wished to end them before the time that Heaven had appointed, and in a manner that was singularly impatient. She has repented now of that impatience and that rashness on that morning by the side of the water.

"I would I could atone," she said; "but can it be true, or is it a dream of my fancy, that he rescued me and spoke loving words to me—told me he loved me? It must be a dream, but it is a sweet one," and she sighed.

She was sitting on a low, soft-cushioned chair in a ward of the hospital. It was a glorious morning in early June. Even London and the neighbourhood of Tottenham Court Road looked bright and cheerful, for the sky was clear blue. The windows of the ward were wide open, and Aileen's chair was drawn close to one of them, so that she could watch the ever busy world outside.

All at once she saw him on the other side of the way. Yes, there was no mistaking that graceful swing with which the tall man moved along. The sun shone on the bronzed, handsome face. Where was he going? Not coming there—not to the hospital? Yes, he has entered the yard, and is now crossing it. Does he, then, know that she is there? Can it be possible that after all it was not a fever-dream—that he had rescued her from suicide and brought her here?

She was aware she was in the Middlesex Hospital. She knew she had tried to drown herself, or at least, that she had gone close to the edge of the water with the full intention of throwing herself in, though she might have shuddered and hesitated before she took the fatal plunge, and then she had been rescued by somebody. Was it indeed by Edward Athlone, or was it a baseless dream?

Nay, might it not even now be only a dream that she had seen him cross the entrance court of the hospital? And if it were not a dream, and if he were even now under the same roof with her, it was possible that he had come to see somebody else. She tried to reason herself into regarding things in this light, but her heart beat so wildly that she could hardly breathe, and she felt ready to faint. One of the nurses, seeing her look ill, brought her some restorative cordial which was ordered for her. She drank

it, but listened all the while in intense anxiety for the next person to enter the room.

The sound of footsteps and voices outside in the corridor was heard. The next moment the door opened, and there entered one of the doctors of the hospital. He was followed by Edward Athlone, looking grander and nobler than she ever remembered him. There was a strange light in his eyes that somehow she dared not meet.

In another moment he was seated by her side, had clasped her hands, and was gazing into her eyes. He spoke, but the wild joy which his presence gave Aileen so confused her senses that she was deaf to the actual meaning of his words, even as in moments of intense anxiety and excitement, when we receive a letter, it sometimes happens that the words we are so eager to read dance before our eyes, and we are unable to read them.

What was Edward Athlone whispering in those low tones in Aileen's ears? Words of love? If they were Aileen knew that the pitiless voice of Duty would command her not to listen to them, and hitherto how obedient poor Aileen had been to the calls of Duty. She had loved the power and bowed her own will to it. She had loved good and eschewed evil almost by nature. Now something within her struggled against this cold and pitiless voice, which said to her:

"This man is a nobleman's son. His love can only soil and poison your life. It is like eating delicious though poisonous fruits to listen one more moment to his honied words."

And what were the words which Edward Athlone was whispering into Aileen's ears? All at once their meaning was rendered plain to her, and she distinctly heard him say:

"Aileen, you are more than life to me. I have come to take you away to a newer and brighter life. I love you, Aileen. Do you know that? Do you believe me?"

Aileen seemed to hear the sharp voice of Miss Godfrey ringing in her ears.

"You must beware of the Athlones; they are wild young men. Don't let Mr. Edward wreck your life, as young Lord Evesham did your mother's many years ago?"

"I ought not, I dare not, listen to your words, Mr. Athlone," whispered Aileen.

But though she said so her eyes beamed with love, and Athlone smiled, for he read a passion in their depths that answered to his own, and he well aware what glad surprise would fill the girl's soul when she heard that he meant to make her his happy wife.

"I believe my Aileen will listen to me and will smile more brightly than I have ever seen her smile."

"No," Aileen answered, and she turned from his burning glances. "I am Aileen, a peasant girl—a servant who must find a situation where she may earn her bread. You are the son of the Earl of Clondell."

"No, Aileen, I am not," answered Athlone.

Aileen gazed at him in mute amazement. What could he mean? The next moment she heard the doctor address him in the deep, conventional respect which in England is always paid to a nobleman.

"Did your lordship say you wished a carriage to be ordered to take this young lady to the station?"

"Yes, if you have no objection, and she has none," Edward answered, with a grave smile. "I wish Aileen to go into lodgings at Eastbourne which I have engaged for her. I have provided the poor child with the hospital nurse you recommended, Miss Pyatt, who will arrive here in about an hour and travel with her to Eastbourne."

"It is the best thing you could do for the poor child," said the doctor.

Aileen stared in amazement.

"But, Mr. Athlone, people will talk. I mean they will say it is wrong for you to pay for me. They will say—"

She stopped, clasping her hands together tightly, and blushing deeply.

"If we minded what people said," replied the doctor, "we should not be able to carry on the

business of life. It is right for a young girl to regard her fair name as a jewel beyond price. At the same time, when a good nobleman, who is the landlord of the people who brought you up, and who, having known you from a child, respects you as a well-conducted girl—when this nobleman, who found you in Regent's Park ill and starving, brings you here, pays extra for your comfort, and when you are convalescent sends you down to the seaside at his expense, providing you with a pious and highly-educated hospital nurse, herself a lady of good family, you have no right to speak of the interpretation which vulgar minds may put upon an act of holy charity."

Edward turned away to hide the smile which was creeping over his face. He was a noble-hearted fellow, but not such a saint as the good doctor supposed. All the while he was counting the hours which must intervene before he could make Aileen his wife, but he certainly meant to keep that secret to himself for a little while longer.

"You are mistaken, sir," Aileen suddenly and nervously said, for strange thoughts sprang up in her mind; "that gentleman is not the Earl of Clondell—are you, sir—but the Honourable Edward Athlone, his second son."

Edward turned round and gazed at her sadly, and then Aileen saw that he wore deep mourning.

"My father died last week at Brussels, where he was staying with my mother, and Lord Athlone met with a violent death the week before. He leaves a childless widow. I am thus the Earl of Clondell."

Aileen felt her heart sink. Alas! what a social gulph divided her now from the man she loved. How dangerously dear he had become to her. What could she do to hide herself and her love from him for ever and ever? Earl of Clondell! Was it possible that Aileen, who had no alternative as soon as her health was restored except to seek a situation as a servant—could it be possible that she loved with all her heart and soul the Earl of Clondell?

She sat still and looked dreamily into the street. Edward Athlone, Earl of Clondell, looked at her in her pale beauty and read her soul as if it had been an open book, but he dared not make his startling proposal of marriage to her in her present weak state; he feared the news would seem to her unreal and untrue.

Besides all this, it was in the romantic soul of the artist earl to render his marriage a private one, and to keep it a profound secret until it was over. He knew well the world and the pomps and vanities of it; he knew what cutting remarks, what cruel gibes it would make on the circumstance of his making a servant girl into a countess, and he wished to go away to Italy, and there, amid the glories of nature at her brightest and best, amid the clamour of foreign tongues, he would pass a few years with his beautiful rustic bride, educating her in the land of art and song, teaching her other languages, making her read and study and learn by degrees some of the garnered wisdom of the ages.

This was his scheme, but he dared not breathe a word of it yet to Aileen. The startled look in her eyes, the changing colour on her cheek, warned him that he must be cautious how he gave her too roughly even the shock of a great joy. He knew well how much this girl loved him.

"Aileen," he said to her, softly. "Aileen, trust me and fear nothing. Remember you saved my life; I can never forget that. You have no need to trouble yourself with anxieties for the future; I will provide for you, and in a way of which your own parents, if they were alive, could not cavil or object. Trust me, Aileen; your honour, your fair name are dear to me as my life."

These were strong words, but they had the effect of re-assuring and comforting Aileen. The young earl took an affectionate but respectful leave of her. An hour afterwards she started with Miss Pyatt, the lady nurse whom the doctor had recommended, for Eastbourne.

April 17, 1880.

Three whole weeks are gone, and Aileen is restored to perfect health. Her beauty shines forth again with renewed lustre like the blossom of some lovely flower which has been closed during the summer night and opens its petals to greet the day with a fresher bloom, a brighter radiance.

The earl had given Miss Pyatt money to buy Aileen everything she required, thus she had abundance of pretty simple seaside costumes, linen, toilet necessaries, every comfort that a young lady could require. Miss Pyatt bought nothing fine for her protégée. From what she had heard Miss Pyatt was under the impression that the earl meant to educate Aileen for the post of governess in some public school. She had heard that in Ireland, during the rent agitations, this young girl had saved his life, and that he was grateful.

As for Aileen, she spent her mornings on the beach reading good books, which good Miss Pyatt lent her. But one fine July morning she found one of the said books rather dull. She closed it as it lay on her lap and looked out to sea with wistful eyes.

All at once there came a shadow between her and the sun. Looking up she perceived a tall, aristocratic man of middle age, who was looking at her earnestly and with his soul in his eyes. Something in his face attracted Aileen most powerfully. She returned the earnest look of the stranger, who crossed over to her and said in broken tones:

"Is your name Aileen Moore?"
"It is, sir," she answered, quickly.

"Thank Heaven!"

Aileen looked up at the stranger in surprise. He drew a little case from his pocket, opened it, and handed it to her. She, looking at it, recognised a faded photograph of herself taken two years before at Athenry in Ireland.

"How did I get that?" asked the earl of his child.

"You must have asked Mrs. Darrell for it, sir—Mrs. Darrell of Kilallen."

"That is so, Aileen. I have searched for you high and low, but since you were so brutally turned adrift by Lady Athlone at the instigation of her maid, all trace was lost of you. I have seen Lady Athlone; I have even told her part of the story, that you were my child, which is true. I did not say the whole truth, that you are my legitimate child, the Lady Aileen Evesham, for I did not know in what condition I might find you. If you had not been as good and true and pure-minded as your face tells me you are, I should indeed have given you a fortune, but I would not have acknowledged my marriage with your angel mother, because it would not have benefitted her, and would have stained the family name. But you are a daughter a king might be proud of. It was only last week that the idea struck me of writing to Mrs. Darrell for your likeness if she had one, and see how soon I have found you."

Explanations were given on both sides. The earl frowned at first when Aileen told him that she owed all her comforts to the Earl of Clondell, but an interview with good Miss Pyatt set his mind at rest. And now we have only one more scene to describe and the story will be ended.

It was a moonlight night. Aileen had dined with her father and Miss Pyatt. She stepped out on the balcony and looked at the moonlight sleeping on the waters. The earl, fatigued with his journey, slept in his armchair. Aileen heard a step and a voice below on the terrace. Another moment and both were on the steps of the terrace, and the young Earl of Clondell entered. Aileen advanced timidly to meet him, and the Earl of Llandudno awoke, rose to his feet, and bowed to the astonished young noble.

"I recognise the Earl of Clondell," said the father of Aileen, "by his family likeness to the late earl. I have to thank you, sir, for the kindness you have shown to my child, Lady Aileen Evesham."

Edward started back and his face grew pale.

"Have I lost the dearest prize on earth," he said. "Aileen, Aileen, my journey here was to ask you to be my wife!"

"I will!" cried Aileen, "for, oh, I love you with my whole heart!"

Three months afterwards the fashionable papers announced that the Earl of Llandudno had followed his married daughter, the Countess of Clondell, to Florence, where she and the Earl of Clondell proposed passing the winter.

[THE END.]

THE EASTER HOLIDAY AND PUBLIC AMUSEMENTS.

THE streets of London were deserted on Easter Monday, and people betook themselves into the country either by the rail, the road, or the river. Brighton, of course, was the most attractive of the neighbouring Elysiums of London, the Volunteer Review there drawing vast crowds of Londoners. In the evening the numerous and varied places of amusement of which London boasts were well patronised; and, according to custom, the Crystal and Alexandra Palaces were greatly thronged throughout the day. City customs were honoured in the observance.

THE theatres were marked by fewer novelties than usual, for whilst three of the leading theatres presented exactly the same bill as at Christmas, most of the other changes have been made in the intermediate period. With the growth of the metropolitan population new theatres have sprung up in like proportion; but on every side experience has taught the wisdom of submitting important new works to the play-going public on other than holiday anniversaries. Conspicuous among the houses where no change was made is the Lyceum. Saving for the few days' holiday taken by the performers during the last week, "The Merchant of Venice" has held the stage without interruption since November, and is, both historically and pictorially, performed with as much efficiency as ever.

HAYMARKET.

At the Haymarket, the revival of "Money" has answered managerial expectations, and, if for nothing else, has been welcome for the chance it has given us of renewing acquaintance with the Lady Franklin of Mrs. Bancroft. A more enjoyable specimen of perfect comedy acting has seldom been seen. Mr. Bancroft presents Sir Frederick Blount from the most agreeable aspect consonant with the tone of a work in which nearly every character is either foolish, priggish, or mercenary. The Dudley Smooth of Mr. Archer is a picture that lives in the memory, and the Lord Glessmore and Stout of Messrs. F. Robertson and Kemble respectively are also noticeable as performances that are thoroughly characteristic, whilst free from exaggeration. The next revival will be the late Mr. Tom Robertson's comedy "School," which of its talented author's works has only been exceeded in public favour by "Caste" and "Ours."

PRINCESS'S.

At the Princess's "The Streets of London" has been received with such satisfaction that Mr. Walter Gooch no longer definitely fixes the period of withdrawal of the drama, but announces it for "a few weeks." Every care has been exhibited in the revival, which is now presented with even more realism than before. The effect of the far-famed fire scene is greatly assisted by the appearance of some members of a real fire brigade, with real horses and a

genuine engine, and the whole incident is gone through with a vividness that is evidently as fully recognised as it is appreciated. The street scenes, more especially the view of Charing Cross by night, with its crowd of strollers of all degrees, real gas lamps, etc., is as literal a production of every-day life as we can expect, or indeed hope for, on the stage; but, above all, the drama has a sturdy interest that is set in motion directly the curtain rises, and steadily pursues its course until the final scene, with scarcely an indication of flagging.

IMPERIAL.

At the Imperial Miss Litton's enterprising exertions are obtaining their reward. To this clever lady belongs the credit of giving an afternoon performance each day of the week of works that may be regarded as classics of the British drama. "As You Like It" is the best acted revival witnessed within the recollection of present playgoers. The high-spirited and coquettish Rosalind finds in Miss Litton a charming interpreter.

DRURY LANE.

At Drury Lane Miss Braddon's "Lady Audley's Secret," as prepared for the stage by Mr. Robert Walters, has found a home, having been selected to balance with its serious and tragic interest the opera-bouffe, "La Fille de Madame Angot," superbly mounted, and given with excellent effect. The principal parts were taken by Mdlle. Cornelie d'Anka and Miss Burville—both ladies being long experienced in the delineation of the characters of Mdlle. Lange and the revolutionary offspring of Madame Angot. The style of Mdlle. d'Anka is, perhaps, a little too pronounced for some tastes, but it is full of vigour, and the rendering of the famous duet brings down the house. There is plenty in the opera to account for its popularity; and the whole forms a capital entertainment.

THE VAUDEVILLE.

"Cobbers," by Mr. Charles Wills, has been produced at the Vaudeville. The flimsiness of the structure is described with much significance, and the probability of its being easily swept away is directly suggested. There are now and then fitful glimpses of capacity about Mr. C. Wills's dialogue; but the piece is so carelessly and clumsily slung together, that it cannot be pronounced successful. The prospect of a long run is very slight.

THE AQUARIUM.

THE promenade concerts given under the direction of M. Riviere at the Westminster Aquarium continue to meet with warm encouragement. The nightly programme is made as attractive as possible, and the excellent performance of the band is varied by songs from eminent artistes, as well as from vocalists who exhibit promise of future distinction in their profession. The holiday entertainment drew a crowded audience. The four Sisters Cassardi, Tyrolean singers, were most deservedly doubly encored. A picturesque portion of the entertainment was the Gathering of the Clans. The scene—which was a very pretty one—represented the Highlands, and the performers were all children. With admirable precision this army, which numbered about seventy, marched and counter-marched, displaying the varied costumes which indicated the different clans. They went through the broad-sword exercise, in which was seen the flash of the short sword and the glitter of the round shield. The counter-marching was loudly applauded, and when they prepared to receive cavalry, as also when, wearied with the day's fighting, they had their bivouac, the scenes were very realistic.

THE STRAND.

At the Strand "Madame Favart" is still the reigning favourite, and though more than a year has elapsed since she took up her quarters in Mrs. Swanborough's theatre, the public still crowd to her nightly levées.

THE GLOBE.

At the Globe the new opera bouffe, "The Naval Cadets," is an attraction which, if not equal to the "Cloches de Corneville," bids fair to occupy a full share of public attention for some time to come. Whatever aids handsome dresses, effective scenery, and able representation can bring to bear upon the future of a lyric drama are here assembled. "The Naval Cadets" is sumptuously mounted, its exposition is thoroughly efficient, and whatever defects are noticeable in the work belong to it in the abstract and are not traceable to the interpreters.

OXFORD MUSIC HALL.

At the Oxford Music Hall according to the practice here, a new programme was specially provided, and it was received with hearty and general applause. The chief novelties are a new "fantastical entertainment," sustained by the Miltons, and the singing of Tyrolean melodies by the Sisters Cassarti. Mr. Jennings, the indefatigable manager, spares no effort to place a good and complete entertainment before the public. Mr. Fred. Albert contributed the topical songs for which he has gained a reputation; the Brothers Raynor made a re-appearance with some entirely fresh comic business in their grotesque style; and Miss Beesie Bonhill was deservedly applauded in a patriotic composition, entitled "Here's a song, my lads, for England." The songs by Mr. Charles Coborn are alone worth a visit to hear. He is musical and natural. The ballad and serious comic element is represented by Miss Jessie Leslie and Miss Maggie Zimmer. The performances throughout are excellent.

CRYSTAL PALACE.

THERE was a large influx of visitors to the Crystal Palace. During the whole of the day the grounds as well as the interior of the Palace presented an animated scene. The Palace grounds are in splendid condition. Inside the building at dusk three electric lamps on Dr. Siemens' system were lighted, and added to the picturesque character of the central nave and transepts.

THE FOLLY.

BYRON'S new comedy, "The Upper Crust," was a most successful production. We believe that the piece has been specially written for Mr. Toole. It certainly affords him a good opportunity of displaying his peculiar humour.

A GERMAN FESTIVAL.

In the vine growing regions of Germany, festivals are of frequent occurrence. Dancing and music, eating, drinking and smoking, are the rule. Some of the out-door sports are very amusing. It was our good fortune to witness a tub-race by the peasant girls. The way in which such a race is conducted is as follows: Not less than ten, and sometimes as many as thirty, young girls, all dressed as nearly alike as possible, appear on the ground, where a number of small-sized wash-tubs, filled to about four inches from the rim, stand in readiness for them. At a given signal from the judges, who first see that the tubs are all of one size and contain the same quantity of water, these girls simultaneously swing them on their heads with remarkable ease, and with arms akimbo await the second call, at which they promptly start. For a few paces they generally keep within

even range. But gradually the line is broken; some one quickens her steps, the others follow suit; then there are some sudden standstills as the water begins to drip over the rim, and not daring to support the tub with their hands, a dexterous jerk of the head, a quick backward movement, and tub and water are sent splashing into the road.

With this monceuvre they have saved themselves a good drenching and disgrace. Finally, but two of the contestants remain on the ground, and as they near the goal the excitement becomes intense. The final winner is presented by the judge with a wreath; the victor of some other game, after presenting her with the handkerchief he has received as a prize in his game, carries her off as the queen of the day, amidst the shouts and hurrahs of the admiring spectators.

Balancing heavy burdens on their heads is considered a necessary accomplishment, and encouraged as such in all their out-door sports by offering prizes to the winners. I have seen women carry a large basket full of eggs on their heads, and one of butter and cheese on each arm to the nearest town, a distance of five miles, with comparative ease.

LOST THROUGH GOLD;
OR,
A BEAUTIFUL SINNER.

BY THE AUTHOR OF
"Frank Bertram's Wife," "Strong Temptation," &c., &c.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

FRIENDS OR FOES.

I cannot tell how the truth may be—
I say the tale as 'twas said to me. SCOTT.

It seemed to Dorothea that she had never felt so desolate in her life as when she went back to the "Royal James." All her life through—even in the years when she toiled hard for daily bread—she had been used to make merry at Christmas-time, and now she could not do so. Although no trouble touched herself, her heart was too full of another's trouble for her to be glad.

Mrs. Malcom had done her best to make Mrs. Hardy's room pleasant and inviting, and to-day she had stuck boughs of holly about, and striven hard to make the little parlour Christmas-like. It seemed a mockery to Dorothea. She ate her roast fowl and apple pudding in lonely state, with little appetite, wondering dimly the while how it fared with the girl in Halsted Prison.

George Arnold came in almost before she had finished. They talked of indifferent things while Mrs. Malcom was bustling about, but when she had placed the tea things on the table and retired, George looked into Dora's sad, thoughtful face and said:

"You have failed. I need not ask you. I can tell it in your very look."

"I have failed. I did my best," brokenly; "but it was in vain. She will never see you until she is free."

"Two weary months to wait."

His words were a complaint, and yet they gave joy to Dorothea.

"Do you really think all will go well?" she asked, excitedly. "Do you know I had almost begun to despair? Alice has infected me with her fears."

"Does she fear?" asked Mr. Arnold, gravely.

"She seems to have made up her mind that the verdict will be one of 'Not proven.'"

"I thought so, too, until to-day."

"You have a clue," joyfully, "and, oh, tell it me. How could you keep it from me?"

His gravity was a contrast to her excitement. Both felt strongly on the subject; but one was

ready to clutch at any excuse for hope, while the other was over anxious and uneasy because he knew that he had to fight against the strength of a woman's jealousy, against the plots of the beautiful sinner who was Lost Through Gold.

"Tell me," cried Dorothea, imploringly. "Let me hear all about it."

"It is little enough," he said, sadly, "but the lawyers may make something of it. You know the strong point—the only one I may say—in our favour is that the prosecution have no proof of Alice ever purchasing poison. They can prove finding it in her drawer. We assert it was placed there without her knowledge, and that she never purchased the arsenic at all."

"And you have found the chemist who sold it?" breathed Dora. "Why, they must let her free after that."

"I wish we had," returned Arnold; "the whole case would lie in a nutshell then. No, we have not been so fortunate as that. But do you remember the paper in which the remains of the poison were wrapped?"

"It was ordinary white chemists' paper."

"It was like ordinary chemists' paper cut by hand instead of machinery? Well, Mademoiselle Gruet found this morning a sum book which belonged to the children, with the blank pages near the end cut out as if with a penknife."

"That doesn't help us," cried Dora, impatiently. "They will only say Alice cut them out herself."

"Listen, that is not all. This sum book had been missing for a week before the earl's death. Mademoiselle was in Lady Aston's boudoir this morning talking to her when she saw it. As it belongs to the children, she took it up and was going to carry it away, when the countess said, 'She had no idea what it was. She had not touched it.' You know the old proverb: 'Whoever excuses himself accuses himself.' Probably, had Lady Aston said nothing mademoiselle would never have thought of examining the book. Directly she saw the pages missing, she sent for me."

"It is very little," said Dora, doubtfully. "Alice admitted to me this afternoon that she thought Lady Aston had really given the poison to the earl. At least, she didn't own quite she thought so; but I could see she did."

"I believe it, too," answered George. "Lady Aston is capable of anything; she is a desperate woman."

"Yet how the bailie hung on her words. She is so beautiful and fascinating we shall not be able to fight against her."

"Remember the trial is to be in Edinburgh. Personal prejudices will not have the same weight there as in this little country town."

"How could she have killed her husband?" asked Dora, musingly. "By his death she loses name, position, and title. What could have made her do it?"

George Arnold believed he knew, but it was a reason he could not impart to Mrs. Hardy.

"The little girls were left alone on that dreadful evening," he said, thoughtfully. "Adela declared she saw her stepmother go upstairs into Alice's room before she went up with the doctor."

"If they would only believe her."

"They may. She is very intelligent, though she is so young."

"And she is a countess," said Dora, more bitterly than she often spoke. "So even the bailie may believe her."

Mrs. Hardy sat back in a low, old-fashioned chair, her small, white hands crossed idly on her lap, an expression of greater happiness on her fair face than had been there since she listened to James Carden's love story at The Grange.

George Arnold sat opposite, his eyes gleaming with the light of hope, a smile on his mouth. He seemed to be looking at Dorothea. Really, his thoughts were with the lonely captive at Halsted. He was wondering what success would have come to his love story by next Christmas Eve, yet, to an outside observer, the two might readily have been taken for lovers.

Duke Hardy coming slowly up the wooden staircase, saw them tête-à-tête, and the sight

wed him. He paused a moment at the open door before disturbing them.

"You have made me very happy," said Dorothea to George, thinking only of the news he had told her.

"And myself," with a rare smile.

"I look happier, too."

"I feel happier than I have done since I read of this wretched mystery at Rouen."

Pleasant this for Duke Hardy to hear—at least, it ought to have been since he did not like the trouble of Dora's affairs. He made up his mind to return to London at once. True, Christmas Eve was a strange night for travelling; but Mrs. Hardy seemed so provokingly able to get on without him.

He lingered still; he was no eavesdropper as a rule, but he could not bring himself to face these two in the first flush of their happiness. Mr. Arnold rose to go; Dorothea put one hand in his, and her voice sounded low and clear as she bade him farewell. A minute more and he encountered the barrister at the door. Not a thought that Mr. Hardy had been there any time came to George. He shook hands with him warmly, and passed on.

"Mr. Arnold has just been," was Mrs. Hardy's greeting.

"Contemptible puppy!" murmured our barrister.

"Really," said Dora, with a touch of her old spirits, "I fail to see the resemblance."

"Of course you do. Women always do."

"Something has vexed you," she said, gently. "I felt so happy myself that I did not notice it before."

"Of course you were happy. I could see that."

"Is it not grand news? Weren't you surprised?"

"Surprises are not always pleasant," grunted Duke.

"I think you must be dreaming to talk like that."

"I feel very wide awake, indeed; remarkably so."

Dora shrugged her shoulders. A month ago she would have delighted in a verbal fight; just now she was not in tune for one.

"Did not Mr. Arnold tell you all about it?" she asked, in rather a bewildered manner.

"I haven't seen him except for an instant on the stairs."

"Oh, that explains all you have not heard!" with a great relief at her heart that his strange speeches were so easily explained, and then she went on to tell him of all Mr. Arnold had told her that evening.

"That looks black for the countess," said Duke slowly, when she had finished, "but Guy must prove she put the paper there, and he can't do that?" a little testily. "A child of thirteen will never be believed against Lady Aston."

Dora's face clouded over.

"Do you really mean it? Oh, I had been letting myself. Be so happy."

"Is that what made you so happy?"

"Of course it is. What else was there in this dull village?"

"I begin to think I am an idiot," said Duke. "I was going up to town by the evening mail."

"To spend Christmas alone at your chambers," said Dorothea, finishing his sentence for him. "Well, I mustn't call you names, but it was rather stupid. Whatever made you think of it?"

"Well, I believed—"

"Yes," repeated Mrs. Hardy, encouragingly, much in the way one helps small children who are trying to say the church catechism.

"I meant I thought Arnold had been speak-

ing to you."

"Well, so he had," with a puzzled look in her grey green eyes which Duke could not see because they were bent on the ground.

"Don't jest," cried the barrister, very seriously.

"I never felt less like jesting in my whole life. What do you mean, Mr. Hardy? You are speaking in riddles."

"Well," answered Duke, a little nonplussed, "when I saw you two together alone just now I really thought you had promised to marry him."

Dorothea burst out laughing, she really could not help it, in spite of her friend's trouble, and of the hurt, aggrieved feeling his words caused. There was something so comic in Marmaduke's hard, dry way of relating his suspicions that she could not help it.

"Were you looking through the key-hole?" with just a trifle of disdain in her voice.

"Certainly not," indignantly. "The door was open."

"Really, Mr. Hardy, you are too absurd," still keeping her eyes on the ground, and with a quiver in her voice, which might have been anger, but was more like pain.

"Am I?"

"Yes, you must think I am matrimonially mad. Only a few weeks ago you heard I had advertised for a companion, you thought then I meant a husband."

"It was a very natural idea."

"It was a most unnatural one, and now you are worse this time. Here is a man I have known barely a week, whom I have met under the saddest possible circumstances, and you decide at once that I am going to marry him."

"But are you not?" persisted Duke.

"Of course not, you must be mad to think of such a thing."

His pride was up at that.

"Not at all, Mrs. Hardy. You forget history sometimes repeats itself."

"I am not history, and if I were I don't understand what you mean."

"I had left my cousin Raymond barely a week when I heard of his marriage, and no circumstances could have been sadder than those under which you married him."

Dead silence. He had been stung into uttering a very bitter truth. Dora sees a sting in every word. She sits motionless, with her white hands locked together, and those clear grey green eyes fixed on the floor.

Duke feels uncomfortable. He knows he has gone too far. He never meant to be unkind, and he has been both cruel and cowardly. He fidgets absently enough in his chair. He would like his hat to twirl in his hands, but it is out of reach, so he busies himself with a button of his coat instead, and tries hard to think it engages all his attention.

If she would only look up. If she would only say something, however bitter it was. Duke wonders dimly why they two can never meet without quarrelling, and then he sees one or two large tears course each other down the fair, colourless cheek.

He gets up. He has a horror of women's tears. He hardly knows a remedy. But the kettle is boiling madly on the fire, and a tray of china and silver is on the table. He remembers vaguely to have heard tea was a remedy for all feminine ills and he fills the teapot almost to the brim. It is the first tea he has ever manufactured in his life and he has no notion of waiting for it to draw. He pours some hurriedly into a cup—it is about the colour of straw—adds four lumps of sugar and a table-spoonful of milk and brings it over to Dorothea.

"Drink this," he urges, eagerly, "and you'll be ever so much better."

It is strange to see him there before her holding his teacup, this man whose eloquence has conquered many a London jury to his client's cause, who is one of the cleverest barristers of the day, whose clear mellow voice is more at home in law courts than in drawing-rooms. It is strange, I say, to see him bending over Dorothea with the cup of straw-coloured liquid he believes is tea.

Dorothea raises herself. Her face is like an April day; her cheeks are wet with tears; her glittering eyes show that more tears are coming and yet there is a dimple, and a suspicious quiver about her mouth as though she wishes to laugh.

"I am not ill," she says, quietly.

Mr. Hardy does not reply, but still stands holding his cup. So seeing he means so to stand

until his end is gained Dorothea takes the cup and drinks the contents—fortunately without stirring it. Marmaduke builds up the fire and then returns to a chair at her side and looks scrutinisingly at her face.

"Whatever made you cry?" he asks, at length.

"I don't know quite. Everything has worried me lately, and then you said that—"

"What?"

"That I should marry anyone in a week, no matter how sad the circumstances are."

"I didn't say it," returns Mr. Hardy merrily; "you must have misunderstood me."

"Perhaps I did."

"Well?" he says, presently. "I hope—"

"It's no use your hoping," she returns, quickly. "You had better resign yourself to your fate," with a melo-dramatic air which was very amusing. "I shall remain Dorothea Hardy all my days and you'll be obliged to make excursions to Kerston four times a year unless you send the papers by post, or make up your mind to trust one of your clerks amid the snares and dangers of an interview with me."

"I'll think of it," replies Duke, laughing. Dorothea moved to the table and poured out some tea. The cup she gave Duke was very different to the staff he had concocted for her; but the barrister was far from guessing the feeble merits of his concoction.

"It is Christmas Eve," said Dora at last. "Where do you generally spend Christmas, Mr. Hardy?"

"I generally go to a dinner party."

"How horrid!"

"Not at all. The only trying thing is a family party which begins early and where people are expected to be merry, uninterrupted, from three till midnight. A decent gathering which does not commence till half-past seven is quite another thing."

"Well, it is not my own idea of Christmas."

"And what may your own idea of Christmas be?"

"Happiness, I think," sadly. "It always used to be the happiest day in the year for us."

Mr. Hardy wondered who the "us" meant. He would have given much to unravel the history of Dorothea's past, if history there was. But he asked no question on the subject.

"Have you heard from Mrs. Stone lately?"

This return to their old safety valve caused Mrs. Hardy so much that she had difficulty in not laughing.

"Not very lately. Aunty says I am a bad correspondent."

"You have had so much to occupy your thoughts."

"Yes, I don't feel I can really think of anyone but Alice until after the trial."

"And the trial is the second week in March. I shall remember that."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

COLLINS.

"Two strings, twin passing strange." SHAKESPEARE.

CHRISTMAS passed, the New Year came, Marmaduke Hardy had returned to the messy chambers at the Temple, and Dorothea stayed on still at the "Royal James."

Very little happened, no fresh light was thrown on the earl's death; the Astan mystery was as far as ever from being explained—unless people accepted the silly explanation which seemed probable—that Alice Tracy had done her kinsman to death.

George Arnold lingered at Halsted employing detectives and lawyers and fees both largely, but there came no result. The only breath of hope was caused by the testimony of the little countess, that she had seen her stepmother enter Alice's room before she went there with Dr. Brown, and as Duke Hardy had said, what chance had they of the jury believing a child?

testimony against the word of Lord Aston's beautiful widow.

Lady Aston had formally applied to George Arnold, as her stepdaughter's guardian, to allow her to remain at the Manor for twelve months. No proposal could have been more disagreeable to George. To say that he hated Sybil would be untrue; he only knew her as she was, he knew that she had no truth or honour. But around her hovered the memory that she had been his first love, his boyhood's darling; he could not bear her, but just as surely he could not trust her.

He would not send a reply in writing; painful as it was to him, he went to the Manor and sought an interview with the widowed countess. She received him in her boudoir, her beautiful face pale as marble, her dark eyes with a feverish brilliancy about them. Perhaps she thought of the last time they had met, when he had spurned her love, but she gave no sign, she was grave and composed.

George thought he had never seen a woman more business-like. She was sitting on the sofa when he entered, a piece of embroidery in her hand, her lap full of skeins of many-coloured silk, whose shades contrasted well with the heavy crepe on her dress; she rose slowly and held out her hand.

He took it, the footman was within sight, so he could hardly help himself, then he sat down opposite the countess.

"Well," said Lady Aston, eagerly, "am I to be allowed to stay on suffrage in my old home? Surely if the Manor is Adele's it can't hurt her my living in it for a few months longer. I shall not contaminate it."

"Why do you want to live in it, Lady Aston?"

The question was quite unexpected; the countess paused for a minute, she seemed at a loss.

"The fact is, George, I am poor, miserably poor, considering what I have been accustomed to."

"To what you have been accustomed to lately, yes."

"It was very cruel of Frank," raising her cambric handkerchief to her eyes; "he ought not to have taught me to love luxuries if I had not the means to enjoy them."

"Lord Aston never struck me as an avaricious man."

"Nor me. I had no idea of the nature of the will until I heard its contents, it was a blow for me."

"Fortune has not favoured you much lately, Lady Aston: you have lost your husband and your fortune at one stroke."

She shook her head.

"I shall not complain if you let me stay quiet at the Manor. I really can't afford a house this year."

"Can't you go back to your mother?"

"Go back to be a pensioner of Mr. Ellerslie after being Countess of Aston and mistress of the Manor! Thank you, George, I should not think of such a thing."

It occurred to George, after all, her husband had not been so cruel: she had, under her marriage settlement, quite as much money as a penniless wife had any right to expect; he felt quite sure there was some stronger reason than the one she gave for her wishing to stay at Halsted.

"If only Duke Hardy were here with his clear head," thought George, "he would soon find out about it."

Mr. Arnold discovered the finding out rested with himself, for Lady Aston did not attempt to enlighten him.

"You will have to be in Edinburgh for the trial," she said at last.

"Oh, yes, I can manage that. It was a great mistake to postpone the trial; why the matter could have been settled by this time."

A chill ran through the listener's veins as he reflected how it might have been settled.

"You seem to care little enough about the result."

"It is too evident. Nothing can save Alice Tracy; she will give her life in payment for my

husband's; perhaps, though, these days may be of use to her. At twenty-three one does not care to leave life too suddenly."

"Sybil!" cried George Arnold, forgetting the years of their maturity and remembering only that such as she was he had known her when she was a little child, "is there no mercy in your heart? For two years almost you lived constantly with Alice Tracy, you saw her blameless life, how can you accuse her of a deed so foul and unnatural as your husband's murder?"

"I do not accuse her—the law does that."

"But you were the first to attract the attention of the law to her; you have pursued her since with a relentless cruelty. Have you no pity for a girl who has never injured you?"

"Never injured me," muttered Lady Aston, between her teeth. "Who told you that?"

"Many people; my own perceptions among other things."

"It matters little," said Sybil, resolutely. "She will die."

"Not if human means avail anything; already we have important evidence in her favour."

"Indeed," her bosom rose and fell rapidly, but no other change came to her. "Whom do they suspect now?"

"No one is named, but proof is pretty strong that the arsenic found in her room had never been purchased by Alice Tracy."

If he expected Sybil to change colour or show any emotion at this speech, he was bitterly disappointed, she did neither.

"Alice Tracy was the only creature who profited by Lord Aston's death, that's the strongest proof against her."

The door opened imperceptibly, George Arnold rose up and shut it.

"Don't!" cried Lady Aston, quickly, "it looks as though we were talking of something terrible."

It was the strangest fancy George had ever heard, but it was her room, and he was bound to humour her; he restored the door to its state of semi-openness and returned to his seat.

"That Mrs. Hardy is still in Scotland, I hear?"

"Mrs. Hardy will not return to England until after the trial; she has devoted herself to Alice heart and soul. I think I never saw such unswerving attachment in so recent a friend."

"It is strange," replied she who had lost herself for gold, "very strange; the charm this girl seems to have for attracting people. I had friends in plenty, but no one would have left their home for me like that."

"Perhaps they know you can take care of yourself."

"George, we have talked enough of other people; once more, can I stay at the Manor, or do you mean to turn me out next month?"

"I wish I could understand why you wish to stay," spoke George, rashly. "I should have thought your first impulse would have been to get away."

A peculiar expression passed over the countess's face, it was neither sorrow nor impatience, but a remarkable mingling of both.

"I do wish it. George, do you think I would ask a favour of you if I could help it, you who have neglected and deserted me?"

"It shall be as you wish," replied the master of Trent Park, after a moment's pause. "Lord Aston's will give me full power over the Manor. I promise you, Lady Aston, that for one year from your husband's death you shall remain in it undisturbed."

A look of relief passed over the beautiful features.

"You have taken away my worst anxiety. Ah, George, it is so wretched to be poor."

At that moment the door opened wide and a natty-looking maid, wearing a white cap loaded with black ribbons, entered.

"Did you please to ring, my lady?"

Quick as thought it flashed on George that this woman had been listening; when the door seemed to open a few minutes before doubtless she had pushed it for her own purposes. He looked at her with calm scrutiny, and he noticed that Lady Aston's dark eyes were turned away from her maid's face. She who was one of the

haughtiest women in England, answered her servant humbly.

"No, Collins, it must have been some other bell."

The maid lingered to adjust the fire; she was so long over it that George Arnold grew impatient; he never opened his lips while she remained in the room, the moment she was gone he rose to go.

"I shall not see you for some time, I suppose?"

"Not here," he answered, truthfully; "this house has such painful associations for me that I do not care to come to it often than I can help; besides, Lady Aston, our views on so many subjects are opposed that I doubt if it would be possible for us to meet as friends anywhere."

He did not shake hands with her again, there was no footman looking on this time; he went straight downstairs to the schoolroom. Mademoiselle Gruet greeted him joyfully in her rapid broken English, the children sprang to him in eager welcome; both loved him well.

"I thought you would never come," murmured George. "What would mamma want with you so long?"

"Do you think no one wants me but you, then?"

"Yes," chimed in the child-countess, "I am sure Alice does."

George Arnold took no notice of this remark, he turned to mademoiselle with a smile.

"I have promised Mrs. Hardy to bring back these two little chatterboxes to spend the day with her if you will let them go."

Mademoiselle gave a ready assent; she and Dorothy had met and the lively Frenchwoman could not praise the pretty, fragile English lady enough.

When the little orphans were out of hearing and had rushed off to the nursery to prepare for their visit, George turned to the governess.

"Mademoiselle, how soon could you be ready to take the children away from the Manor?"

The question was so unexpected that the lively Frenchwoman was at a loss.

"To stay, Mr. Arnold? but would it be for any sojourn?"

"The fact is this, mademoiselle: I have just been with Lady Aston. She has implored me to allow her to remain here for a few months. I hardly like to turn her out against her will. She is the earl's widow, nothing can alter that, but I cannot bear that her home should also be that of those poor children."

"The mansion is large enough," observed mademoiselle, "we rarely see maladi."

"For many reasons it seems undesirable. How soon, mademoiselle, could you be ready to take them away?"

"Away from Halsted?" asked mademoiselle, with the most dismal air; "but dat so triste."

George Arnold wondered what could be the attraction of Halsted that both the countess and her governess were so averse to leaving it.

"Not far away," he answered, cheerfully. "If I turn the little girls out of one good home, I will see they have another. I want them to be at the Park, mademoiselle; I shall feel far easier about them if I can see them every day."

Mademoiselle Gruet's spirits revived in a most extraordinary manner. She declared they could set off to-morrow—that very evening if he liked. George declared there was no such hurry; in fact a day or two would be required for the housekeeper at Trent Park to prepare for their reception.

"There is no lady to do the honours of the Park to you, mademoiselle," he said, with the easy cordiality which made him such a favourite, "but I will do all I can that you may be comfortable."

"You are very good," said to his surprise Mademoiselle Gruet blushed. "Doro is one thing I want much to tell you, but I met the heart."

George eagerly entreated her to speak. He fancied she might have something to tell him bearing on the fate of Alice Tracy, but it was a more personal matter.

"De Doctor Brown," began Mademoiselle Gruet, confused, "he have one heart of gold."



[MY LADY'S MAID.]

"Assuredly," hardly understanding what was coming next.

"And by these so sad times we much have been together," went on mademoiselle, waxing very defective in her English as her embarrassment increased, "and so ven you do provide someone to take care for de little angels I do go to him."

This speech was hardly clear. George wondered frankly in what capacity the lady was going to Dr. Brown. He was a childless widower, so it could not be as governess; and the doctor was hardly rich enough to boast a lady housekeeper.

"To stay?" asked George, awkwardly. "Do you mean to stay, mademoiselle?"

"But certainly," with an imitable shrug of her shoulder. "You do not miscomprehend me, Mr. Arnold. The doctor and I we do mean to be married."

Poor Mr. Arnold. He had depended firmly on Mademoiselle Gruet, and now she seemed failing him.

"What on earth am I to do with the children?"

"Let dat not trouble you, my brave sir. I do stay here until you can arrange all dat. I do tell the Doctor Brown he must wait until dese things do arrange themselves."

And the worthy surgeon's bride elect looked encouragingly at Mr. Arnold. The children came back then dressed in their deep mourning. It always went to George's heart to see them in all the trappings of woe. Adela looked grave and thoughtful, but True had recovered her bloom. They were both affectionate, warm-hearted children, but Gertrude had high spirits. Her father's death and Alice's danger could not sober her for long.

"I do wish we could go out every day," she said, longingly, as mademoiselle fastened her gloves.

"I daresay," laughed George. "Will you come and pay me a visit, True?"

"When?" exclaimed the child, eagerly. "Oh, do let it be this week."

"It shall be just as soon as mademoiselle can manage to bring you," returned the guardian kindly. "You are all coming to stop at Trent Park for little while."

"I'm so glad," cried Adela; "everything here makes me so sad."

"I was afraid so," breathed George, placing his hand caressingly on her shoulder. "Well, we'll see how you like Trent Park."

"But will mamma come?" asked True. "Will she let us go?"

"I will let you go. Your papa gave you to me, you know. Your mamma will not come; she does not like the idea of leaving the Manor, and I think she will enjoy the quiet of your being away."

"I cannot think what is the matter with mamma," said Adela, simply; "she is so altered."

"In what way? I do not see it."

"She is so nervous. I was there yesterday talking to her and she would make me leave the door open, and Collins came in and stopped nearly all the time."

"Who is Collins?"

"She is mamma's maid; I can't bear her."

You can guess that this speech came from True. That little lady loved the sound of her own voice too well to be often willingly silent.

"Why don't you like her, Gertrude?" asked Mr. Arnold, feeling pretty sure that he shared the dislike.

"I think she doesn't behave nicely to mamma. She is only a servant, and yet she seems to do just what she likes."

"Yes," endorsed Adela, "mamma said yesterday she should like to go out, and Collins said point blank she couldn't, the weather was too cloudy."

"She didn't say quite that," amended True, "but that mamma must be careful; she wasn't out of the wood yet."

"Has the countess been ill?" asked George of mademoiselle.

"But no; miladi do complain not at all." He felt puzzled. A strange instinct seemed

to tell him some secret hung over the Manor. He could not even guess its nature, but he felt very sure of its existence. The children unwittingly helped him.

"Collins has never been so nice since dear papa died. Do you think, Cousin George, poor mamma has not any money to pay her?"

"Whatever makes you think of such a thing?"

"I heard the servants say mamma would never be able to dress in velvet and wear such pretty things as she had done."

"My dear child, you are quite mistaken. Lady Aston has a liberal income. She is not nearly so well off as when your father was alive, but she has ample to keep her in the position of a lady."

"I thought perhaps she could not pay Collins," said Adela, "and that was why Collins was so horrid."

George smiled in spite of himself. The idea of Lady Aston being unable to pay her maid struck him as too ridiculous.

"We mustn't wait any longer," he said quickly. "Say good-bye to mademoiselle, and let us start. Mrs. Hardy will think we are never coming."

His own carriage was waiting. The footman handed the children in, and the fine horses soon bowed them rapidly along the road to Halsted.

"I wish Mrs. Hardy was our aunt," said True, suddenly; "I do like her so."

"I wish she lived with us always," declared Adela; "we should not miss Alice so then."

And from those few words the idea dawned on George that Mrs. Hardy might perhaps be prevailed on to receive the two children until he could provide a successor for Mademoiselle Gruet. He said nothing of his plan, but he had quite made up his mind to ask her. He shared the children's liking for her. It seemed to him she possessed that rarest and happiest of combinations—a man's head and a woman's heart.

(To be Continued.)



[ON THE TRAIL.]

VIOLA HAROURT;
OR,

PLAYING WITH HEARTS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"Ezander," "Tempting Fortune," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXV.

BURIED ALIVE.

Now it is the time of night
That the graves all gaping wide
Everyone lets forth his sprite
In the churchway paths to glide.

No sooner had Fritz gone from the room than Lady Clementina Sutton became nervously anxious. An undefined dread of something terrible about to happen took possession of her. Coming events always cast their shadows before.

So restless did she become that she could not sit still; but she failed to inspire the same dread in Viola, who was as passive as if she was in the hotel at Berne. When Madame Fritz entered with the tea, she overwhelmed her with questions about avalanches. The good woman had no fear of them.

It was her husband, she said, who was always talking about them, though there might be some danger this time as little Pierre had seen stones rolling down the mountain. But Fritz was a cautious man, and if there was anything to apprehend he would let them know in time.

The lamps were lighted, whereupon her ladyship examined the way in which the house was built. The walls were of heavy blocks of stone with woodwork outside, and the roof was supported by strong iron bars or girders. The other houses were not built in this substantial manner.

It was Fritz's dread of some appalling calamity which had induced him to go to all this expense. His wife had ridiculed these precautions, but he said it would protect those within if the snow did fall.

The kitchen where he and his wife lived was more strongly built than any room in the house, for the walls were of double thickness, and thick iron pillars supported several girders, on which rested beams of timber.

His bed was at the upper end of the kitchen, Pierre's was close by, and the window looked out on the yard, where a stone house had been erected for the goats and poultry. When Madame Fritz came to clear away the tea things she could not help seeing how very nervous her ladyship was, and she invited her to come and sit in the kitchen.

"We are only poor folks, and it is a poor place for ladies like you," she added. "But such as it is, I gladly place it at your service if you want company."

"Certainly, I will come with pleasure," replied Lady Clementina.

"And I will go to bed," said Viola.

"I declare you will do nothing of the kind," exclaimed her aunt. "I know something awful is going to happen, and I wouldn't let you out of my sight for anything."

"What nonsense! Am I a child, that I cannot do as I like?"

"In this instance you cannot. Really, Viola, your temper is getting unbearable. I shall have to give up trying to assert my authority over you."

"The sooner the better, my dear aunt."

"Please don't answer me. When you are married you will be released from my control; until then you are under my charge and owe me a certain amount of obedience. I insist on you coming into the kitchen."

Viola rose, looking displeased.

"It's the safest place, miss, for it is all stone and iron," said the wife of the guide.

"You hear what the good woman says," exclaimed her ladyship.

"I do. But what do you suppose is going to happen? You are always imagining something dreadful. I am just dying for sleep. However, I suppose you must have your own way. Show me the way, please, to your kitchen."

They all three went into the place of refuge, where Pierre was seen nursing a cat before the fire. Some bread, which had just been baked, was on the dresser, and a small piece of bacon hung suspended from one of the rafters.

This was all the food there was in the house, because Fritz intended to kill some poultry and catch some fish for the ladies the next day. The woman looked at the clock which had come from Geneva when she was first married. It stood on the mantel-piece and had stopped short at ten o'clock.

"Save us," she exclaimed, "the clock has stopped, and that is a thing it never did before all the time we have had it."

"Perhaps it has run down?" suggested Viola.

"No, indeed. I wound it up only an hour ago. How I wish Fritz was here. Something dreadful is surely going to happen."

In great distress of mind she took down a big bible from a shelf and began to read. The cat became restless about this time, and mewed plaintively. A dog, which was generally kept in the yard, broke his chain and came howling to the door.

Pierre let him in, and he crouched down before the fire, exhibiting every symptom of fear. These things were remembered as omens or portents afterwards. It was nearly half an hour after the clock had stopped, when Viola asked her aunt if she intended to retire to rest.

"Certainly not, until the man comes in," was the reply.

All at once Madame Fritz dropped the bible on the floor and uttered a shrill cry as she clasped her hands together.

"Oh, Heaven!" she exclaimed, it is coming."

A noise like the rumbling of distant thunder was audible.

"What is coming?" cried Lady Clementina.

The woman sank on her knees and exhibited every symptom of extreme terror.

"The snow! the avalanche! I hear it. I am the daughter of a mountaineer, and was born among the mountains. It is impossible to deceive my ear. Oh, Heaven! what will become of us?"

At this declaration Lady Clementina and Viola looked blankly at one another. They had no reason to doubt the woman's word, and the instinct of self-preservation rose within them. They obeyed the first impulse, which was to rush to the door.

"Stay," exclaimed Madame Fritz, "it will be certain death to go out. For Heaven's sake remain where you are!"

They paused, and it was lucky they did so, as the next moment a terrific shock was felt. The house shook to its foundations. A rush of cold air pervaded the apartment, putting out the lamp. Every article of crockery was tumbled from the shelves and broken. The glass of the window was shattered, and snow scattered all over the room.

The fact was patent now. The avalanche had indeed fallen. They were buried alive. Fortunately, the way in which the kitchen was constructed enabled it to withstand the shock, but the rest of the house was ruined. Had the inmates been anywhere else, they must have been instantly suffocated. Madame Fritz was the first to recover herself. She lighted the lamp, and they all regarded one another with terror.

"What is to be done?" asked Lady Clementina, who was pale as a ghost.

"We must wait and trust in Providence," was the answer. "Do not despair; Fritz is outside. We cannot starve. I have milk in that wooden bowl, bread in here, too. Let us pray."

They sank on their knees and prayed fervently, even Viola, feeling at that awful moment that life was worth having. She did not know how dear it was to her until there was a chance of losing it. Slowly passed the hours; no one could sleep. Eagerly they listened for some sound from the outside world. None came. All was still as the grave.

CHAPTER XXVI.

WATCHFUL FRIENDS.

*Hope on, hope ever, is a motto mine,
There's always one above to help and save;
Watchful friends our destinies repair,
And bid us never sink into despair.*

In due time Herbert Conyers and Sandford Newton, whom we left waiting at the Paris railway station, obtained a train to take them to Berne. They were fidgeting over the delay, for they knew Madame Menzies had got the start of them, and were fully aware that she was capable of concocting and executing the greatest villainies.

Lord Tarlington and Mr. Pittard-Sutton could not have engaged anyone more fitted by nature and education to carry out the design they had in hand, and the two young men could enjoy no peace until they had put Viola on her guard.

On arriving at Berne they had breakfast, and having slept in the train they took a walk through the city. It happened that they passed by a telegraph office and remarked a handsome dark woman come out. Sandford Newton gasped his companion's arm tightly, saying in a whisper:

"That is she."

"Who?" asked Herbert, being completely in the dark.

"Madame Menzies. See, she has dropped something."

A piece of paper she had crumpled up in her hand fell on the pavement, and Sandford picked it up without being observed.

"You may depend she is up to some mischief," said he. "We must read this. Come into the first café."

There was one close by, which they entered, and calling for two cups of coffee, they sat down.

"How did you know her?" inquired Herbert Conyers.

"Oh," laughed Sandford, "there are few follies I have not committed in my time, dear boy, and having my fortune told was one of them. I went to the Menzies' house to peep into the future. Here is a face once seen never forgotten."

"Yes, it is a remarkable face, and strikingly handsome. What is in the paper?"

Sandford Newton read it aloud. It was the transcript of a telegram from Madame Menzies to Lord Tarlington, and ran as follows:

"I have sad news to tell you. It will distress you very much to hear that an avalanche fell last night at Drachenfells, burying the villagers, among whom were Lady C. S. and Viola. Poor things! There was a terrible noise. I shall be in Paris in a few hours."

The effect of this communication on the readers was electric.

"By Jove!" said Herbert, "she has lost no time. What does this mean?"

"It means that Viola and Lady Clementina are dead. Perhaps the word 'avalanche' is used to express something else, but it means the same. They are done for!" answered Sandford.

"Oh, no, it is impossible. Here is the waiter. Let me speak him." Herbert continued, excitedly.

The waiter approached with the coffee.

"Dinner, monsieur," he exclaimed.

"Thank you. Where is Drachenfells?"

"There is no longer a Drachenfells, monsieur," replied the waiter. "It was pretty well at the base of the Alpschloss, but the mountain has betrayed the people who lived under its shelter. An avalanche fell last night. Drachenfells has ceased to exist."

"Great heaven!" cried Herbert. "there is more in this than meets the eye. Sandford, we must be up and doing."

The waiter shrugged his shoulders.

"What can be done?" he said. "If you cut through the snow you will only come upon the dead bodies of the unfortunate. Les misérables!"

"Come!" cried Herbert, impatiently, as he threw down a coin to pay for the untasted coffee and rushed out of the place without waiting for any change.

"Where are you going?" inquired Sandford; "the waiter is right."

"He is wrong; he is an idiot!" answered Herbert Conyers, impatiently. "Follow me!"

He hailed a passing carriage; they got in. First of all he ordered the man to drive to the principal hotel, where on inquiry he found that Lady Clementina Sutton and Viola had really gone to Drachenfells the day before. Next he went to the mayor of the city and offered to pay for the services of a hundred men at once if they were sent to dig out the victims of the catastrophe.

The request was complied with, and the mayor promised to send the number of men required without delay. Herbert and Sandford going on to the site of the village to await the coming of the workmen and direct the operations.

They were driven to the valley, when the extent of the calamity became fully revealed to their view. A huge mass of snow had fallen, and though the midday sun was shining full upon it, it did not seem to have any appreciable effect.

It appeared as if the snow had fallen unequally, for one side of the village was not so deeply covered as the other. Herbert was utterly at a loss to tell in which quarter Viola and her aunt were buried, and there was no one to give him any information, consequently he did not know where to commence his excavations. Half distracted he walked up and down.

"Keep a good heart," said Sandford; "we will find her, no fear."

"Yes, but how?" answered Herbert. "What hope have we of getting her out alive? Oh, this is awful!"

"Hope, my dear fellow, rises eternal in the

human breast, and shines like a little twinkling star. It may be afar off, but it is there."

"Leave me alone. Don't try to comfort me. I shall go distracted!" cried Herbert.

He could not bear even to be talked to, and rushed away from his well-meaning friend, going up the valley, shaking his fist angrily at the grim mountain, which frowned upon him from its dizzy eminence. A short distance from the village he heard groans. Looking in the direction from whence they came, he saw a man bound hand and foot struggling violently to free himself from his bonds.

"For the love of Heaven let me loose!" cried the man.

"Who are you?"

"Fritz, the guide. My wife and child are under the avalanche. I heard it fall, and I could have saved them!" was the reply spoken in agony.

Muttering much at finding the man in such a condition, Herbert drew a knife from his pocket, and with some difficulty cut the leather straps which held him fast.

CHAPTER XXVII.

SUSPENSE.

Fritz: "Be collected. No mere amusement. Tell your pittoresque history in full harmo-

Madame: "Oh, was the day!"

As soon as Fritz had stretched his limbs and run about a little to restore the circulation of his blood he felt a new man, and began to tell Herbert Conyers all about the fall of the avalanche, not forgetting to relate how the tall, dark woman had felled him to the earth, and, as he imagined, afterwards buried him.

This explained to Herbert the meaning of the telegram he had found, and made it clear that Madame Menzies was the person who had attacked the guide. In his turn he told Fritz how deeply interested he was in the fate of the ladies who were buried beneath the snow with his wife and son, and when Fritz informed him of the precautions he had taken in building his house, hope began to revive in his breast.

His meeting with Fritz was of the utmost importance, because he knew precisely the position of the house and could tell the workmen in which direction to dig. So, as soon as they had finished their mutual explanations, they hastened to the spot where they had left Sandford Newton, finding that the hundred men had arrived with their spades and shovels and were simply waiting for someone to direct their excavations.

Fritz at once drew an imaginary line from the extremity of the mass of snow, telling them to begin tunnelling from a certain spot. Large fires were lighted, tents were set up, and the men were divided into two gangs, so that they could work day and night without any cessation.

Even Herbert, Sandford and Fritz took a hand with the others, encouraging them by voice and example. It was slow work, for a great distance had to be worked through, and at the end of twenty-four hours they calculated that they had only penetrated half of the required distance.

The two young men were tired out with their exertions and sought a brief rest in one of the tents, both being sanguine of a successful result of their labours, if the inmates who were buried alive in the house were not suffocated before the rescuing party could reach them. Food, they imagined to be plentiful enough to sustain life, and if the supply of milk gave out, the snow would supply water. It was the absence of fresh air which terrified them.

When they awoke they were much refreshed and delighted to find that the labourers had gone two-thirds of the required distance, as nearly as could be calculated. Fritz had not closed his eyes, he seemed to be possessed of almost superhuman endurance; but he was naturally of an iron frame, and the thought of the danger of his loved ones kept him up.

Sandford fully shared Herbert's indignation at the dastardly conduct of Madame Menzies; but then both agreed that Lord Tarlington and his brother were more to blame than she, as the woman was only the active agent in their hands.

With such enemies always plotting and on the alert, Viola's danger was continuous, and setting his own love for her on one side, Herbert felt how supremely necessary it was for her to marry someone, as only a husband could effectively protect her. If she was married and anything happened to her, the property she possessed would go to her husband.

If she could not be persuaded to marry, then the must be induced to make a will in Lady Clementina Sutton's favour. Sandford knew that he had no chance of winning Viola's love now, and Herbert to some extent hoped against hope, but they both wished to do all that lay in their power to protect her.

It was afternoon on the second day. They had been at work, and the tunnel they had been driving under the snow was drawing near where they supposed the house to be. Expectation was at its height. Herbert could scarcely speak, so great was his agitation.

Sandford encouraged the workmen with copious draughts of brandy, and when at last a report came from the foreman that they had touched brickwork, Herbert seized a shovel and darted into the tunnel, whither Fritz had preceded him. As fast as the snow was cut out, it was placed in blankets, which were handed from one to another until they were encased outside.

"That will do," shouted Fritz, in a voice hoarse with excitement. "Here is the kitchen door. Give me a crowbar."

Not a voice was heard within. Outside, the noise made by Fritz beating the door in was the only sound, and Herbert's heart beat strangely at the dread silence within. Another moment, and the door was burst open, when the lanterns were raised up on high and husband and lover entered.

What a sight met their gaze. All the inmates of the room were stretched upon the floor as if helpless. A moment's examination of Lady Clementina Sutton showed that she had actually ceased to exist, for a beam had fallen from the ceiling, dislodged by the great weight above, and had fallen across her body, which was crushed. Viola was insensible and lay pallid and motionless. Seizing her in his arms, Herbert carried her to the outer air, while willing hands did the same for the others.

Placing his hand on Viola's heart, Herbert found to his delight that she still lived, though her pulse was very feeble. The boy Pierre and his mother were also alive, but for Lady Clementina there was no hope. The rescuing party had taken the precaution to have a doctor and carriage in waiting, so that medical attendance and transport were not wanting.

Viola was conveyed without delay to the hotel at Berne and everything was done to restore her to consciousness, but she was permitted to see no one except the doctor and the nurse until the following day. Fritz had the satisfaction of seeing his wife and child recover. They, however, were the only ones who were saved in the village.

The next day Viola was well enough to sit up and talk, though her nervous system was greatly shocked, and she continually shed tears while speaking, being much affected at the melancholy death of her aunt, which they did not attempt to conceal from her.

She was deeply grateful to Herbert Conyers and Sandford Newton when she heard all that they had done for her, and when she was sufficiently collected she narrated what had happened after the fall of the avalanche until, overpowered by the foul air, from which all the oxygen had been extracted, she became insensible.

They ate and drank, spending their time chiefly in praying for deliverance and discussing their chances. Eagerly they watched for the faintest sound from without, and their hearts beat wildly when they fancied they heard voices, but when they found that their imagination had

deceived them, they relapsed into a deeper and darker despair.

After a time they began to experience a difficulty in breathing, accompanied by a dizziness in the head and a ringing in the ears. This was followed by a strong inclination to sleep. One by one they fell upon the floor. They were almost unable to speak, and their voices sounded little above a whisper.

At midnight, as well as she could guess, of the second night after the accident a terrible crash shook the building. A heavy beam fell right across the prostrate body of Lady Clementina, who, uttering a sepulchral groan, almost instantly expired, being literally crushed to death.

Viola herself wished to render some assistance, but she was powerless to move. Overcome with horror, she soon after lost her senses, and knew no more until she found herself in bed at the hotel.

Lady Clementina was buried at Berne in a quiet little cemetery on a hill. Viola being too unwell to attend her funeral. The poor girl felt now absolutely friendless, and evinced a stronger desire for Herbert's company than she had hitherto done.

Sandford Newton took his leave after the funeral, seeing that he could be of no further use, and apprehending that he was somewhat in the way. In fact, he still cared so much for Viola that he did not like to see all her attention bestowed upon his rival, Herbert, and he hoped to find in the dissipation of a gay capital that peace of mind to which at present he was a stranger.

After his departure, Herbert talked seriously to Viola, who listened to his arguments attentively. He urged that she should take measures to protect herself, and suggested that her first act should be to return to London and make a will. If she had no one she would like to leave her money to, he advised a bequest to a charitable institution.

Accordingly she went back to London, he accompanying her, and her first visit was to her lawyer. Herbert awaited her return at the hotel where they stayed, and saw her enter the room with a paper in her hand. She was looking brighter and better, for she had to some extent recovered from the sudden death of her aunt. Youth was on her side, and she strove hard to throw off her grief.

"Here is my will!" she exclaimed. "Read it."

Herbert took the document and was surprised to find that she had devised everything she had, real and personal, to himself.

"I did not wish this," he said, in some confusion.

"Who more worthy of it?" she replied, with a smile. "Have you not twice saved my life? Where should I be now without you had come to my assistance? If Lord Tarlington succeeds in removing me from this world to gratify his spite or his avarice, he will have a barren victory. All I have is yours at my death."

Herbert Cohers seized her hand.

"You have not given me what I prize more than all," he exclaimed.

"What is that?"

"Yourself! Oh, Viola, forget the past and any mistake I may have made in it. Say that you will be mine. Tell me softly, tell me truly that you love me. I will protect you in the journey through life, and if years of devotion will atone for my fault they shall be yours."

She was deeply moved at this passionate appeal, which she felt herself unable to resist, as her heart prompted her to accept him, for with a woman's tenderness she thought she had punished him enough. He put his arm round her, lovingly encircling her waist; she sank upon his breast and murmured:

"Take me, Bertie; I am yours. My heart tells me it is for the best."

This was the culmination of all his hopes. Never was man more happy in the fruition of his wishes, and for the rest of the day he scarcely knew how the time passed. It was arranged that they should be married as soon as a reasonable time had elapsed after the death

of Lady Clementina Sutton, for whom she was in deep mourning.

The estate which Lord Tarlington had been compelled by law to surrender to her was situated in one of the midland counties; it was known as Tarlington Chase. The property consisted of nearly five thousand acres in a ring fence. The house had been shut up as Lady Clementina objected to live in the country.

Now Herbert advised her to take up her residence there until they could be made one. Several months had to elapse before the happy event could be celebrated, and if she engaged a companion she would be complying with the proprieties required by society. He said that he could come down on a visit for a few days every now and then, but have a companion she must, as she could not live alone.

Viola now placed herself unreservedly in his hands, doing all that he required, and an advertisement was inserted in a prominent paper for a companion. Many letters were received in reply, there being one among them which she answered, the result being a visit from Miss Agnew, a young lady of a severe appearance whose references were highly satisfactory.

Herbert was present when she called, and although he did not quite like the expression of her face, he could not object to her. She talked French fluently, played and sang very well, was not too talkative, and evidently possessed all the qualifications which were required.

He felt that Miss Agnew and himself would not be friends, but as Viola seemed to like her he made no objection to her being engaged, which she accordingly was, and that day he saw Viola and her companion off to the Chase, promising to come down in a day or two.

The housekeeper had to be communicated with, and, consequently, everything was in readiness for the reception of the young heiress, who had, up to the present time, never seen the property from which she derived a large part of her splendid income.

The park, with lakes in it and deer grazing in the fern, the magnificent walks and elms, the gardens, conservatories, shrubberies, orchards, were all charming, while the old-fashioned furniture and ancient pictures made her feel at home at once.

Miss Agnew shared her enthusiasm, expressing a wish that she had been so favoured by fortune as to possess such a lovely place. In the daytime they wandered about the gardens and park or drove in the country. In the evenings they sat before the fire in the drawing-room or Viola sang while Miss Agnew accompanied her.

So things went on for a week, Herbert writing to her every day in the most loving manner. He was detained in town on some business of his father's, and could not come down as soon as he had expected, but he hoped to be with her soon and trusted that she liked her companion. Viola scarcely knew whether she did or did not like Miss Agnew.

There was a peculiar secretive look about her large lustrous black eyes which so well matched her hair, glossy as raven's wing, and though she did not talk much, she seemed to be constantly watching her. At times she was abstracted, as if her mind was far away. She was also an early riser and went out walking before breakfast. On one occasion Viola had to wait for her, as she had not come back at the usual hour.

"Where is Miss Agnew?" she asked of Mrs. Hobbs, the housekeeper.

"She is out, miss, and I think she has gone to The Rosary, for she asked the way to it," was the reply.

"Indeed! Where is The Rosary, and who lives there?"

"It's a pretty house, of the old-fashioned kind, miss," exclaimed Mrs. Hobbs. "It did belong to Lord Tarlington, but he sold it, and it has been to let for some time. It stands just outside the park gates, and I did hear that a foreign lady, Madame Mendosa, had taken it."

"Miss Agnew can possibly have no acquaintance with Madame Mendosa. It is strange she

should walk in that direction and stay out so long without asking my permission. I do not like it," said Viola.

"Companions isn't servants, miss," remarked the housekeeper.

"Certainly not; yet they owe some attention to their employers."

"Very true, miss; but they think themselves all ladies. I've seen a deal of governesses and such like, and it's my opinion that they're a stuck up lot."

"When I want your opinion, Mrs. Hobbs, I will ask for it. You can go," said Viola, who was angry with Miss Agnew herself, but did not want anyone else to make a remark on her behaviour.

Mrs. Hobbs flounced out of the room, and a few minutes afterwards Miss Agnew came in looking slightly flushed as if she had been walking quickly. In her hand she carried a bunch of such wild flowers as the early spring afforded.

"Where have you been, Miss Agnew?" asked Viola. "I have waited breakfast a quarter of an hour for you. Surely you knew the time."

The companion laid the flowers on the table-cloth by Viola's side.

"I went to pick these for you," she replied. "Knowing your passion for flowers, I thought they would be acceptable."

"Mrs. Hobbs said you had been to The Rosary."

Miss Agnew fixed her sparkling eyes upon her.

"The Rosary? I do not even know where it is," she exclaimed. "Oh, I know what made her say that. Some one of the gardeners told me the prettiest flowers grew near The Rosary end of the park, and I remember I did inquire in what direction it lay. How silly servants are!"

Viola accepted the explanation, and when Miss Agnew, removing her hat, sat down, she poured out the tea and breakfast was proceeded with.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE ROSARY.

LEON: "Doth not every earthly thing
Cry shame upon her? Can she here deny
The story that her blushes do betray?"

The gladsome spring had come, bringing with it sunshine and flowers. One of the prettiest places in the shire in which Viola lived was The Rosary, of which we spoke in the last chapter. It was well named, for the rose was the only flower which was cultivated in its grounds and taught to climb over trellis work, arbour, and wall.

Roses red, white, pink, and yellow, roses of all known hues, and of delicious perfume. Some of the earlier kind were already out, while buds had appeared on standard and bush. It was an old house, dating back to the reign of Queen Anne, having curiously shaped windows and red brick walls, while the furniture, as if in contrast to the exterior, was of modern make.

During an April shower a gentleman with a long beard and thick whiskers, his face partially concealed by a slouch hat, which was drawn over the left side, and having his form enveloped in a heavy black cloth coat, walked up the path leading through the gardens, and knocking at the door inquired for Madame Mendoza. He was ushered into a drawing-room, where he sat in silent expectancy for a few moments, when a handsome lady, clad in an elegant morning wrapper, made her appearance.

"Welcome, my lord," she exclaimed.

"Hush!" he replied, "call me plain Mr. Sutton. I am no longer Lord Tarlington when I venture into these parts."

"Pardon me," she said, submissively.

"By heaven!" he added, in a violent manner, "it makes my blood boil, Madame Menzies, when I think that little more than a year ago I was the ruler here—the Member for the county, and the owner of five thousand broad acres, which have been wrested from me by a chit of a girl, who never knew what it was to be able to call a pound her own."

"Certainly it is very annoying," replied Madame Menzies, who, under the assumed name of Mendoza, had become the tenant of The Rosary.

"Annoying. It is maddening, madame, and no wonder it drives me to plotting and crime."

"Indeed, I do not blame you."

"Look at me, disguised with this beard, this hat, this cloak, obliged to crawl about the place like a thief in the night to avoid being recognized."

He clenched his fists fiercely as he spoke, and seemed to feel the humiliation of his position acutely.

"Let us hope you will soon enjoy your own again," exclaimed Madame Menzies. "Twice we have made an attempt on the usurper and been foiled. The third time we ought to be successful, if there is any truth in the old saying that there is luck in odd numbers."

"We must strike quickly," replied Lord Tarlington. "I am glad you are on the scene, and it was a happy thought of mine to tell you to take this house; it is near the Chase. I presume you do not venture out much?"

"Very little; why should I?"

"True. You see Miss Agnew, I suppose?"

"Certainly; she and I are old friends. Once I got her out of some trouble in Paris when she stole a large quantity of jewellery. Oh, she is under my thumb. It was a good idea of mine to make her answer Miss Viola Sutton's advertisement for a companion."

"Yes, everything seems in our favour this time. It was luck for Viola to choose Miss Agnew, luck again for her to come down here; luck to have The Rosary empty. She shall not slip through our fingers again. The Morton Abbey scheme was a failure, the avalanche failed to kill, and—"

He paused abruptly as if he did not dare to give further utterance to his thoughts.

"Our plan promises well," said Madame Menzies, in an encouraging tone. "Have you heard anything?"

"It is all over London that Conyers and Viola are to be married in a month or two, and I have ascertained beyond a doubt that she has made a will in his favour."

"Has it gone so far as that?"

"Yes; that fellow Conyers has a long head, taking every precaution. Come nearer. I will tell you what we must do."

Madame Menzies drew her chair close to his lordship, who continued the conversation in whispers; not a word which he spoke being audible, except to the person he was addressing.

"Excellent," she remarked, when he concluded.

"You understand?"

"Perfectly. Trust me for not making a blunder," said she, as if confident of her powers.

There was a light step on the grass of the lawn outside, and a delicate tap on the window-pane.

"Ha!" cried Lord Tarlington, starting. "There is someone outside."

Madame Menzies smiled.

"It is only Miss Agnew," she said. "The dear girl always comes that way, so that the servant shall not see her too often. My domestic, I may mention, is a jewel, worth her weight in gold, for she is stone deaf and half blind. I will let her in, shall I not?"

"Certainly."

She threw open the window and Miss Agnew stepped in, looking furtively at Lord Tarlington.

"This is the gentleman of whom I spoke to you," exclaimed Madame Menzies. "You can speak before him."

"I cannot stop a moment," replied Miss Agnew; "my mistress, as I suppose I ought to call her, is sketching in the park, and I am wandering about in search of flowers."

"What news have you?"

"Mr. Conyers is coming to-day to the Chase. She is expecting him every hour, and the carriage has gone to bring him from the station."

"When will you conduct Miss Sutton to my humble home?" asked Madame Menzies.

"In a few days. I must watch my opportunity."

"That will do. I can see you understand your business," said his lordship, nodding his head approvingly.

Miss Agnew shook hands with Madame Menzies and bowing to Lord Tarlington departed as quickly and mysteriously as she had come.

After some further conversation his lordship said, as he put on his hat:

"I shall return to town in the afternoon with the satisfaction of feeling that everything is arranged."

"As far as human foresight can go," replied Madame Menzies.

"Of course. Nothing is certain in this world except death and rent day."

She asked him if he would not partake of some refreshment before he went, but he declined.

"I am in no humour for eating or drinking," he answered; "I want to see the old place and shall take a stroll round before I depart. I expect the poachers have thinned the pheasants out considerably since I left. Perhaps the keepers will arrest me as a rogue and a vagabond. Ha, ha! that would be a good joke."

He laughed bitterly as he reflected on his altered circumstances. Once he had been the monarch of all he surveyed, the lord of the fowl and the brute, as well as one of the leading men of the county. Now what was he? Nearly ruined, deprived of all his possessions, his very name a byword and a reproach.

"I see boards put up containing notices that poachers will be prosecuted and trespassers arrested," remarked Menzies.

"Oh, yes, those were placed there by me. That is nothing now. I was the terror of evil doers, and now I am afraid of the law myself. What a world it is. Well, good-day, and fortune favour you."

"Say us, my lord."

"May fortune favour us. The plural for the singular. Farewell. Wire me if anything occurs. I shall be in London until I hear from you."

So saying he quitted the house and entered the road which led to the park gates. He knew every inch of the country and avoided the lodge, for fear of being stopped. He was acquainted with a gap in a hedge, and through that he walked—or rather crept into what was once his pride and delight.

No one had been more proud of an estate than Lord Tarlington was of The Chase. He had planted trees, made artificial sheets of water, levelled hills which spoilt the view from particular spots of vantage. He was a keen lover of sport, hunting, fishing and shooting, and woe to the poacher who was brought before him in his capacity of justice of the peace.

It cut him to the quick to think that it was now the property of Viola, and would soon by marriage belong to Herbert Conyers as much as to her. The deer looked up drowsily, as if they knew him, the great fish he had put in the lakes jumped up after flies, as if there was no such thing as a rod or a line, and he gnashed his teeth as he thought that he no longer dared angle in these lakes.

Such a reverse of fortune's wheel was certainly very mortifying to a high spirited man like Lord Tarlington. He sat down on the trunk of a fallen tree near the great lake, and like Cromwell after his disgrace with Henry the Eighth, reflected on his fallen greatness.

We must leave him to his thoughts while we return to the Hall, where Viola was waiting for the arrival of Bertie, her heart fluttering with unrestrained delight. They had been parted for more than a fortnight, and to ardent lovers that is an age.

(To be Continued.)

ANYBODY can give advice. Taking it is the difficult part of the job.

WITTY AND WISE.

PRINCE ALEXANDER of Holland is a young man of literary tastes, and does not take much interest in military pageants. On his recent visit to Berlin, a grand military review was given in his honour. It served the Prince for an occasion to be both witty and wise, and to indicate that he knew Prussia's designs on Holland. The story runs thus:

Prince Alexander, with little inclination for soldiering, sat in silent contemplation while the troops were defiling before him. All at once the Crown Prince drew his guest's attention to a Uhlan regiment, with the remark that they were "a fine body of men."

"Yes," replied Prince Alexander, "but they are not tall enough."

This reply, delivered with the traditional Dutch phlegm, a little surprised his interlocutor, who, however, merely observed:

"Very well; then you must see my cuirassiers."

The cuirassiers, erect in their saddles, like men-at-arms of the middle ages, went by in breastplates and plumes.

"Well, what do you think of them?" asked Prince Fritz.

"Splendid men, but not tall enough."

Still more piqued than astonished at this unexpected response, the heir to the crown of Germany exclaimed:

"Indeed! then wait till you see the regiment of the Guard."

In due time these magnificent six-footers made their appearance, and the same query fell from the lips of the Crown Prince.

"They are not tall enough," very quietly returned Prince Alexander, adding, gently but meaningly, "We can flood our country, when we choose, twelve feet deep."

THE PEARL OF THE OCEAN; OR, THE AVENGERS FOILED.

CHAPTER XI.

Mrs. THIRSTANE issued cards for a grand masquerade. The same cards came out full four weeks before the evening set for the entertainment, in order to give the guests ample time to prepare their costumes.

Pearl decided on the dress of an Italian peasant girl, and Mrs. Schuyler insisted on her impersonating Queen Elizabeth. And after no small amount of coaxing, teasing, and the assumption of authority, Pearl consented to be invested with the gorgeous paraphernalia of the Virgin Queen. A few days before the night of the masquerade, Jerry Sawyer made his appearance at Mr. Schuyler's.

"Look a here, Miss Pearl," said he, "I's got a keard with an invite onto it to go to Mrs. Thirstane's to a maskrade! And I'm come here to ask you about it. She sent me a note which sed that I was a friend of your'n and she should like to hev me come in any impersonation that I was a mind to. That is the exact word, I spelled it over, and studied on it all one evening till I can say it like a book, but I haint the leastest idea in the world what it means. Taint a new kind of tog that she wants me to come a riding into, is it?"

"No, Jerry. She means that you may go in any character you like."

"I don't know what you mean."

"A masquerade, Jerry, is a ball where people dress to imitate some other character than their own. As for instance, you may want to imitate Benjamin Franklin, and you will adopt the dress

which he was accustomed to wear, and also his speech and manners as far as possible."

"Oh, oh! I begin to see through it. Well, now the pint is, whose character shall I imitate?"

"Well, Jerry, I would advise you to be simply yourself."

"Jest my idea exactly. It's a pity if Jereboam Sawyer Esquire can't cut a shine as well as any of 'em; I guess I'll wear my grey swaller-tailed coat with the steel buttons, and the trousers that was grandfather Leighton's and carry Uncle John's silver watch."

"You will want a mask."

"A what?"

"A mask, to cover your face."

"Now, Miss Pearl, haint you a leetle hard onto feller? I know I haint so awful good looking as I might be, but then I don't look so bad as I might, and I didn't hardly think you'd be ashamed of my looks. Not that I'm the least bit put out though."

"Jerry, everyone will wear a mask. That is why they call this kind of a party a masquerade. People conceal their faces, and leave their friends to discover who they are by other means than a sight of their countenances."

"Oh, ah; that's it, is it? But you don't pretend to say that you'll wear a mask?"

"To be sure."

"Now, I wouldn't! it's too bad for anybody so pretty as you be to kiver up their face. Don't you go for to do it?"

The masquerade was a very gay affair. Pearl as Queen Bess attracted a great deal of attention. Sir Richard Morton figured as a Spanish hidalgo, and he was not long in deciding the identity of Queen Bess. He advanced to her side.

"Permit a humble subject to salute your grace," he said, bowing low before her, "and may he crave the honour of your grace's company in a quiet promenade?"

Before she could reply a person in a black domino stooped over her, and said a few words in a voice inaudible to Sir Richard.

Their effect upon Pearl was astounding—she fell back a pace—clasped her hands together with a despairing motion, and shook like a reed in the wind.

"Excuse me, sir," she said, "I have to go away for a little time with this—this person."

Pearl's hand was caught in a rude grasp, and she was hurried down the stairs and into a carriage, which was driven to the station, and Pearl was hurried into a train.

"It is done," said Bett to herself. "I am safe."

"When am I to return to my friends?" asked Pearl.

"Never!" said Bett, in a low voice of terrible significance.

Pearl did not reply—she dared not trust her voice, and Bett peered through the window out into the gloom.

Suddenly the whistle shrieked, three sharp, quick cries like some living thing in deadly peril, there was a terrible crash, a shock that sent the passengers headlong from their seats, a crunching of strong timbers, and the flying train rushed frantically down an embankment, and was submerged in the mad waters of a swollen river!

Stunned and benumbed by the shock, it was some moments before Pearl came to a realising sense of her situation, and when she did so, she found herself pinioned down by a part of the debris. She could not move, her feet were fast, and her right arm seemed to have lost all utility.

She closed her eyes and prayed audibly that Heaven would send assistance, and as if in response to her supplication, she heard voices not far off, and the red flash of a lantern broke on her face.

"There is no one here," said a man's voice, "ha! yes there is, and faith, it's a woman. I see the folds of her dress, and the glitter of her hair like gold. Bring the light, quick!"

His companion hastened to the spot, the light shone full on Pearl's face, and revealed to her two presences. One of them was a stranger,

the other was Max Livingstone. She lifted her hand toward him, crying out:

"Oh, Max, Max!" and fainted.

"Good heaven!" he exclaimed, springing toward her, "there is but one voice like that in all the world, Pearl, Pearl, my darling, speak to me!"

"Speak, how can she speak?" exclaimed the other man, "she's fainted dead away, and no wonder, poor thing, with all that weight of lumber on her. Give us a lift here, Livingstone."

And in another moment the rubbish was cleared away, and Max held Pearl strained to his heart, and was kissing back the life and warmth to her cold lips. Her arm was broken, and there were several bruises and abrasions, but nothing more serious.

Max Livingstone lost no time in sending a messenger to Sheffield to acquaint Mrs. Noyes with what had occurred. Mrs. Schuyler and her sister, and Sir Richard had been almost frantic over the girl's mysterious disappearance, and the detective police had already been set at work by Sir Richard.

The baronet reached Highfield only two days later than Max and Jerry.

After Max Livingstone left her, Pearl slumbered sweetly, and her sleep was visited by pleasant dreams. Once more she was a gay-hearted girl, and she lived in the dear old home by the sea at Highfield. Again she roamed the rocky coast, and stood upon the cliff, her apron full of flowers, which she was showering down upon a handsome young officer in a boat beneath.

Then suddenly the scene changed. The wind was east, and drove in the fog cold and grey, which shrouded everything in its ghastly folds. Then all was a long, dreary blank, during which she knew nothing, and suffered nothing.

When she came to herself, everything seemed wonderfully new and strange. She looked around in doubt and perplexity. She was lying on a couch, antiquely carved and decorated, and hung with a canopy of crimson and white, looped up by cords of silver.

The sun was just rising, Pearl thought, as she looked at the windows; the level rays fell in brightly, but they were too cool and clear, and pale for the warm, sensuous flush of the sunset.

She tried to rise, but she was so stiff and sore that she fell back again with a cry of pain. Her arm was tightly bound up in bits of board, and feeling their cramping influence, she suddenly remembered that the limb was broken. Then she thought of Max, and wondered if he had really kissed her when he left the room, or if she had dreamed it.

She could not understand it all, but she would ask Max when he came. There was a bell-cord just above the head of the bed, and after no small amount of exertion, so weak and exhausted did she feel, she managed to reach it. Presently a girl came into the room.

"Did you ring?" she asked.

"Yes, I am thirsty. Bring me some water, please, and ask Mr. Livingstone to come up."

The girl stared at her, made no response, and went out. Pearl tried to smooth back the disordered curls of her hair, for with all a true woman's pride, she wanted to look well in the eyes of the man she loved, even though she knew he could henceforth and for ever be nothing to her.

The door unlocked noiselessly, and Bett Morgan entered. Pearl did not observe her until she came and stood by the bedside. A wild, startled cry broke from her lips, and she shrank back under the coverlet.

"Well, child, you do not seem overjoyed to see me!" said Bett, quietly.

"Great heaven!" cried Pearl, "Bett Morgan, how came you here?"

Bett laughed that grim, sardonic laugh which always thrilled Pearl with nameless horror.

"Haven't you heard that I am a witch? Such characters can be where they please, I believe."

that they both trained in the same company?" "But why is she at Rudolph Hall?" queried Max.

"They are going to force her to marry Colonel Rudolph."

"Good heavens!"

"They confined me to my room because I overheard the whole of their plot, and became possessed of some secrets which I never before dreamed of. They confined me because I threatened to go to the proper authorities with my knowledge, if they did not desist from carrying their plan into execution."

"Whoa," said Jerry, "that sounds as if you was the right kind of feller, and if you be, I beg your pardon for calling your hump a back; but if you are playing us false, I'll beat you within an inch of your life."

"Let the result prove me," said Rob, with dignity; "but we are wasting time. There is not a moment to lose. Even now we may be too late."

They pushed on with all possible speed, and at last reached the outskirts of Colonel Rudolph's estate. In a little copsewood, a few rods from the house, Rob made them halts.

"Fatten your horses here, and we will walk to the Hall. There is a door in the wall which is generally left unlocked. We will enter through that."

"Well, I vow," said Jerry, "you talk as if you knew the place. Shouldn't wonder if you'd been there a sparkling, some time or other."

"I have been there often," said Rob, with a throb of regret in his voice, "now be silent, and follow me."

He soon found the door, which yielded to his touch, and the whole party entered an enclosed court in the rear of the Hall.

The hunchback turned the handle of a door leading into a lighted apartment noiselessly, and swung it open. The four men paused an instant on the threshold, surveying the strange scene revealed to their gaze.

The room was oblong in form, and brilliantly lighted. At the extremity, ranged before an altar of black marble, were Bett Morgan and Colonel Rudolph, supporting between them the form of Pearl, clad in the garments of a bride.

The girl had evidently struggled until her strength had failed, and now her head dropped helplessly on the shoulder of Bett. The intruders entered the room, and Max looked the door behind him, and put the key in his pocket.

The sound of the bolt as it slid into the socket caused Rudolph to look up, and the first glance told him all was over. His face grew livid, and Bett Morgan, releasing Pearl, sprang forward like a tiger.

Max showed her the muzzle of his revolver, Rob speaking hurriedly, said:

"Many years ago Sir Richard Morton, then a very young man and somewhat wild, betrayed a gipsy girl, named Reno Burns. I am her child."

"You!" cried Sir Richard, his fine face crimson with the shame of having his early sin exposed.

"I. He refused to marry the girl, and she were revenge. She had a brother, fierce and reckless as himself. His name was Guido. She bound him by a fearful oath to assist her. The night before the nobleman's marriage with a fair lady of his own rank, Guido Burns and his father made an attempt on the life of Sir Richard; and in the encounter the father was killed. Sir Richard was unhurt. Guido was tried, and transported. The hatred of Reno burned fiercer than ever. She had her own wrong and her father's death to avenge. Well, I must not dwell on the particulars. Sir Richard's wife bore him one child, a daughter named Edith. This child was stolen from its parents by a gipsy named Sam, in the pay of Reno, and taken to sea in a ship bound for America. Reno was intending to follow. The ship was lost, and the little Edith was picked up in a boat by a sailor named Hugh Noyes, who adopted the little waif."

"Great heaven!" exclaimed Pearl, who had

listened with rapt attention to the narrative of the hunchback, "how I have been deceived! Bett Morgan is not my mother."

"No," said Rob, "she is not your mother. Your mother was Lady Alice, the wife of Sir Richard Morton, and for your loss she mourned herself into the grave."

"My child!" cried Sir Richard, brokenly, "come to your father's arms!" and Pearl nestled down against his breast.

Rob proceeded:

"Guido Burns was pardoned before his term of exile had expired, for his good behaviour, and under an assumed name he returned to England. The death of a relative in France had left him immensely rich. By some strange chance a newspaper giving an account of the finding of the little girl at sea had fallen into the hands of Reno Burns, and she knew that the child of her betrayer still lived. Between Guido and herself a deep plan was laid. Guido was to purchase a place near that of Captain Noyes, where he could see the child frequently. He was, if possible, to win her love, and when she became of a proper age, to make her his wife. And then, he was to bring her to Sir Richard, and introduce to him the proud peer of the realm, his darling daughter Edith as the wife of a man transported and branded as a felon—for an attempt to murder the father of his wife. But, singularly enough, the girl Edith, who in her new home was known as Pearl, conceived a strong aversion to Guido, better known to the present company as Colonel Rudolph, and all his efforts to win her love were fruitless. Reno Burns, a few years ago, in a fit of rage, murdered a fellow gipsy, and fearful for her life, she took me and fled from her home. She came to The Roost, because it was near Rudolph Hall, and the residence of her brother. She sought the acquaintance of Pearl, and in order to obtain an influence over her she told her a false story. She awoke to the child that she was her child and her father was a nobleman, but bound her by an oath not to reveal the secret—because she had murdered a man, and the authorities were on her track, and it would be peril for her if aught of her history were known. There, my friends, I think you understand everything fully, now."

"I think so," said Jerry; "let me see: Reno Burns is Bett Morgan, and her brother is Colonel Rudolph, and you and Pearl are half sisters—no, half brothers—darned if I know how to express it."

"You have the idea," said the hunchback.

For an instant a dead silence reigned in the apartment. Then Bett Morgan sprang forward, madness in her wild eyes, and murder in her heart.

"You think I am foiled; Richard Morton?" she hissed through her set teeth, "but I will yet have my revenge. You have found your child, and you shall have the satisfaction of seeing her die in your embrace!"

Quick as thought, before anyone could prevent her, she struck the hand of Pearl as it lay over her father's shoulder with a tiny knife which she had drawn from a casket in her girle.

"Great heaven!" cried Rob, "it is the knife of death."

"Aye. It is steeped in a poison for which no one has ever found an antidote."

And as she spoke she deliberately drew the blade across her own bared bosom.

The hunchback sprang forward, tore Pearl from her father, placed her in an arm-chair, and throwing himself at her feet, applied his mouth to the little purple gash on her hand.

Max flew to her side supporting her against his breast, calling upon her to rally and live for his sake. The paleness which had overspread her face at first passed gradually away. Her colour returned. She looked up at Max and smiled.

"I love you, Max," she said, simply. "I could not be yours because I thought my mother was a murderer."

He kissed the sweet lips so near his own, and then his eyes fell on the poor hunchback. Rob had fallen back livid and gnastly. His lips were

purple, his breath came in quick gasps, but his dying eyes were fixed on the countenance of Pearl with a look of love and devotion which dissolution was powerless to obliterate.

"She will live," he said, faintly; "my life for hers. Heaven, receive me!"

His head sank down, he was dead.

"Look at old Bett," said Jerry. "She is dead."

It was even so. Mother and son—for them "life's fitful fever" was over. The old party, including Jerry, Max, Sir Richard and Pearl, went over to the "Wanderer's Home," where the good people made them heartily welcome.

Colonel Rudolph had been bound and taken into the custody of Jerry, who left him with Major White, the keeper of the gaol, to await examination.

Six months afterwards there was a splendid wedding at the house of Mrs. Schuyler, and Sir Richard gave away the bride. Max Livingstone was made happy in the possession of her he loved, and Sir Richard was satisfied to give his idolized Pearl into the keeping of one who had proved so true and loyal.

Captain Hugh was present, blunt and hearty as of old, rejoicing in Pearl's perfect content; and Mrs. Noyes more than once wiped her eyes with the delicate lace handkerchief Sister Lizzie had insisted on her carrying.

Jerry, in a bran new suit, danced at the wedding, and expressed a wish that it had been his luck to have stood in the shoes of Max.

The young people are happy in each other, and if even a cloud floats across the heaven of their earthly paradise, it is when they remember the tragic fate of Rob, the hunchback.

Colonel Rudolph was never brought to trial. He died of congestive fever a few days before that appointed for his examination.

[THE END.]

A PAXIEBED RUM.

The lower order of labourers are proverbial for their attachment to dogs—bulldogs or greyhounds being the favourite. At a certain county court two cotton operatives sued a third for four pounds ten shillings for the keep of his greyhound. There was an item of fifteen shillings for new-laid eggs, and one of the plaintiffs testified that this was a necessity; "the dog never lay down at night without having a new-laid in its meat; eggs were as necessary for dogs as for 'folks' to keep up their strength." "Why didn't you feed it on roast beef and plum pudding?" asked the startled judge. "We did give it beef," said the plaintiffs, simply, and went to show that the fresh butter charged for had been duly furnished, because when you toast a slice of bread for the dog it must be buttered on both sides." The scandalised magistrate, with the remark that dogs seemed to be treated better than human beings in the cotton district, monauited the plaintiff. And these are the men who decline to work for reduced wages in hard times.

This man who could not hear himself think was probably dressed too "loud."

Not long ago, in a provincial theatre, a baritone made a frightful croak. Hisses and laughter in the audience. Then the artiste came gravely forward and saluted the audience: "Messieurs, I discover that I have issued a false note. I withdraw it from circulation!"

Last year young D. assiduously courted the daughter of a rich pharmacist, hoping to marry her. At that time whenever he spoke of his expected father-in-law, he always said, "That great savant! The famous chemist," etc. Much to his disgust young D. was refused by the pharmacist's daughter. And now, whenever anyone speaks to him of his unattained father-in-law, he says, disdainfully, "Ah, yes, that old herb-gatherer!"



[IN THE CHURCHYARD.]

NOT WISELY, BUT TOO WELL.

"I WONDER how long it will be before I die! Let me see, I am eighteen now, strong and healthy, with no hectic flush on my cheek, and no horrible disease eating my life away. There is nothing to prevent me from living a great many years, that I know of, and yet I don't believe I would care much if I were to die! What is the fun in being a music-teacher, and getting snubbed a dozen times day by stylish young ladies who don't know half as much as I do, but think they are a great deal better because their fathers are rich? There is just no fun in it at all, but I do believe it would be nice to lie here in one of these deep, narrow graves, with the soft, green grass and primroses growing over me, and the birds singing so clearly and sweetly in the willow-tree. I wonder if I couldn't hear them! And strangers would stop to read the inscription on my tombstone, 'Ethel Verner, aged 18,' and say to themselves that that poor girl died young; and Sister Clare would come and hang a wreath of flowers on my head-stone every Sunday morning, and cry and wish that I were with her again. Oh, dear, how nice it would be!"

I have unconsciously been uttering my thoughts aloud, sitting on a flat tombstone that has impolitely fallen away from the head of old Deacon Stubbs' grave. It is just twilight—the sweetest, pleasantest hour of all the twenty-four

that make a day, and just the time I love to wander in the village churchyard, and think of all sorts of things that I never have time to think about at any other hour.

Having regained my breath after my long and dismal soliloquy, I commence in a still louder, more emphatic tone:

"When I get married—if I ever do—I'll—"

"Hush!" coughs a low, masculine voice just behind me.

I utter a little scream, and turn abruptly. There, on another tombstone that has fallen over also, sits a man. He immediately rises, and comes towards me, lifting his hat, and I see that he is a young man, and a good-looking one too. There is not a man in the village half so nice looking as he, and I wish I knew his name.

"I beg your pardon," he says, courteously, bowing low before me; "I did not intend to frighten you. Do not allow me to disturb you—I am going now."

"Oh, no," I answered, warmly, not wishing him to feel that he is in the way. "You did not frighten me at all—that is not very much. Pray don't leave on my account—I like to have you here."

Before I have fairly delivered this sentence I catch a gleam of amusement in the gentleman's eyes, and in an instant I feel a dozen cold shivers chasing each other down my back. What in the world did I say that for? Candour always was my

greatest fault, and this time I think he has the best of me.

"You are very good," says the young man, politely, looking with well-assumed interest at a distant monument, and evidently pitying my confusion, "but I must really go. I should enjoy nothing better" (with a little smile showing itself under his moustache) "than a little chat with you, but—"

"Indeed!" I interrupt, rising with crimson cheeks and flashing eyes. "If you think I would sit out here and 'have a little chat' as you call it, with a stranger, you are very much mistaken! I only meant that you did not disturb me, and you might stay if you wished. But now I wish you would go!"

He looks at me in speechless surprise for a moment, then lifts his hat gracefully and walks away with slow lounging steps. It is very evident, I think, that my rudeness has not disturbed his self-possession and cool composure half as much as he has disturbed me. After he has gone I saunter across the churchyard to my parents' graves, and think, with a little feeling of pride, that their monuments are nicer than any of the others.

We used to be the richest people in the village, dear reader—that was a great many years ago, though, I'll have to acknowledge—but when papa died he left Clare and me under the care of an old guardian who had lost all our money in some grand speculation, and then shot himself so that he would not have to take care of us. And now we are about the poorest people in the village, and live in a little white, vine-covered cottage with an old lady who used to be our housekeeper in our more prosperous days, and I teach music, and Clare teaches French and Latin.

I seat myself on the green sward, and wander off into a dreamy reverie, from which I at last awaken to find that the twilight has deepened to dusk, and picking myself up in alarm, I hasten home. The parlour windows are open, and thinking that Clare is there all alone I push the heavy crimson curtains aside and call out, in my usual impulsive way, as I scramble awkwardly through the window:

"Clare! Clare! Where are you? What do you think?" I continue, as Clare's low, sweet voice answers me from the darkness. "I've been to the graveyard, and, oh, Clare! I've seen a man! Not one of the village ploughmen, but a real handsome, stylish man, and oh! he had the sweetest black moustache. I wish—"

"Ethel!" interrupts Clare, in a low, distressed voice, "I wish you would ring for lights, please. Miss Neilson is here, and wished to see you."

My enthusiasm dies an instantaneous and disgraceful death. Miss Neilson is my most stylish scholar, and a cold chill runs through me as I think of my impulsive communication concerning my graveyard adventure. As soon as the lights are brought in by our one little maid, I turn to the sofa, whereon sits Miss Neilson, with the intention of making a polite excuse for my absence.

"I am very sorry—" I begin, and then stop abruptly, with the words freezing on my lips, for my astonished eyes have fallen upon a gentleman sitting beside her—a gentleman with laughing black eyes looking straight into mine, and a graceful black moustache drooping over his smiling lips—the gentleman whom I so boldly dismissed from the churchyard.

"Mr. Avondale—Miss Verner," says Miss Neilson, sweetly; and Mr. Avondale crosses the room and takes my trembling fingers in his cool hand.

"Never mind," he whispers, softly, bending his head in a low bow; don't look so frightened, I won't tell on you."

And then, with a very slight pressure, he releases my hand and goes back to Miss Neilson, who immediately commences to explain her errand.

"I am going to have a party to-morrow evening, Miss Verner," she said, graciously, "and I wish very much to have you come over. I am sure you will enjoy it. May I depend upon your coming?"

For a moment amazement strikes me dumb. The idea of Claudia Neilson inviting her music-teacher to a party! Before I can answer she rises, and drawing her shawl gracefully over her shoulders, smiles at me, and says, pleasantly:

"Silence gives consent, Miss Verner, so I shall expect you to-morrow evening. I believe I am ready to go now, Mr. Avondale."

Mr. Avondale follows her reluctantly to the door, then stops to shake hands with Clare. My tall, pretty, graceful Clare. How beautiful she looks standing there under the chandelier, in her plain, dark dress, with her bright, golden brown hair drawn carelessly back from her fair, proud face and her clear, shining blue eyes looking steadily but modestly up into the handsome face above her. It is no wonder he is reluctant to go.

"Good-bye, Miss Verner," he says, turning to me, and taking my hand with a wicked flash of laughter in his dark eyes. "Did you really mean what you said in the churchyard this evening?"

"No," I stammer, blushing furiously, for Miss Neilson's severe eyes are upon me, and with a decided pressure of my hand and another laughing glance into my crimson face, he turns away, and the door closes between us.

"I am so glad she has invited you to the party," Clare says, when we are alone. "I think it was very kind. What will you wear?"

"My black silk, I suppose," I answer, disconsolately, all my visions of dancing and happiness fading away instantly. "How very bright and cheerful I shall look," I added, ironically. "But what in the world" (staring in blank dismay at my sister) "will you wear, Clare?"

"I" echoes Clare, laughing slightly, while her fair, delicate face flushes the least bit. "Oh, I am not going. She did not invite me, you know."

"And do you think I will go if she slighted you?" I cry, angrily, my uncontrollable temper rising instantly. "I will not go a step."

"But you must," says Clare, gently, putting her hands upon my shoulders, and pressing her cool, sweet lips to my forehead. "You must go for my sake and for your own. You must not make Claudia Neilson your enemy. My dear little sister, you must go."

How do I look, Clare?" I ask for the fiftieth time, as I stand before the mirror in my room, dressed for the party.

"You look beautiful," answers Clare, proudly.

I take another doubtful survey of myself in the mirror. For me there is nothing pretty in the great brown eyes flashing back at me from the shadow of midnight hair. I wonder why I could not have had blue eyes and golden hair like Clare.

We are twins, and I think we ought to look alike. I fasten a cluster of scarlet fuchsias in my hair and another on my bosom, and then declare myself ready.

"Good-bye, Clare," I say, kissing her, with something like a sob rising to my lips. I do wish you were going."

When I enter the Neilson drawing-room, Claudia sees me, and immediately comes to meet me.

"You are late," she says, in a tone of displeasure. "We want to dance—will you please stay for us?"

"Oh, no!" I answer, shrinking back in dismay. "There are so many here—you must excuse me."

"Excuse you!" she echoes, with flashing eyes. "What do you suppose I asked you for? You surely did not come as an invited guest, did you? Of course I will pay you for playing—come, hurry; we are waiting."

Without another word I seat myself at the piano. What else can I do? Hot, blinding tears dash into my eyes, but I force them proudly back. My cheeks grow warmer and warmer, and my lips feel like threads of fire, yet my hands fly over the keys in perfect time, and the merry dances flutter past me. Suddenly I see Claudia Neilson floating toward me in Mr. Avondale's

arms, and as they pass I hear her telling him about "that Verner girl coming as an invited guest."

I did not hear his reply, but, a moment later, Claudia's low, clear laugh falls on my ear, and a wild, bitter pain rushes through my heart. Oh, why did I come to be insulted and humiliated? Why did I not stay at home with Clare—poor, patient Clare? Heaven knows I would give all I have on earth to change places with her at this moment. The long, dreary evening wears on and at twelve o'clock supper is announced.

"Pray play a march, please," whispers Miss Neilson, as she passes me; and, with swelling heart, I obey her.

As the rustle of silken dresses and the sound of merry voices die away in the distance, I cross the room to the window, and throwing wide open the sash, lean out in the cool, sweet night air, and sob out my suppressed grief and humiliation.

Oh, how dark and dreary life is just now. Oh, if I were only lying between papa and mamma, out in the peaceful churchyard, with no one to insult and sneer at me. I throw myself down on my knees, and lean my burning head on the window-seat, while a low, passionate cry breaks from my lips.

"Oh, Heaven!" I cry, brokenly, "let me die!"

"Why, little one?" exclaims a clear, deep voice behind me, and a strong arm lifts me gently to my feet, "what in the world is the matter? You don't really wish to die, do you?"

"Yes, I do!" I answer, shortly, dashing the tears from my lashes, and looking defiantly up into Hugh Avondale's handsome face.

"But why?" he gently urges, placing me on the window-seat and taking my hand in his.

"It is nothing to you," I answer, turning my head away, for I feel those treacherous tears coming back again. And then I suddenly remember that he must have forgotten to release my hand, and so I quietly resume it.

"Won't you let me take you out to supper?" he asks, abruptly, after a moment's silence.

"No, thank you," I answer, scornfully. "I am going home."

"Are you?" he exclaims, eagerly, his face brightening. "Will you wait here while I bring your hat and shawl?"

He hurries away without waiting for an answer and I look moodily out over the moon-lit garden until he returns.

"You see I knew which was yours because I saw it out in the graveyard," he says, mischievously, as he wraps the shawl carefully—and rather slowly, I think—around my shoulders.

I look up at him then, and laugh, in spite of my efforts to the contrary.

"You don't know how sweet you looked sitting there on that old tombstone, talking away to yourself," he continues, laughingly, stepping through the window, and taking my hand to assist me.

This decidedly bold compliment takes me by surprise that I lose my balance when only half through the window, and fall abruptly and ungracefully into Mr. Avondale's arms.

"I beg your pardon," I stammered, trying to release myself.

But my hair has become entangled in his watch-chain, and it is several minutes before I escape, blushing and trembling, from his arms.

"I will forgive you when we reach your gate," he answers, with a smile, as he draws my hand through his arm, and retains it in a close clasp.

I suppose I ought to withdraw it, but he has been so very kind to me that I don't like to offend him, and to save my life I can't get angry with him—he is so handsome and respectful.

Ah, that sweet, moonlight walk. Will I ever forget it? Ah, indeed, that night I thought—

There is sweet music here that softer falls Than petals from blown roses on the grass.

Oh, why are there no more such nights in our lives—or rather, why can we not always be young? It is only in our youth that we can be

so purely, blissfully happy as I am to-night. The walk, like all other joys, comes to an end at last.

"Good-bye, little one," Hugh says, softly, when we reach the gate. "I have forgiven you for falling into my arms, for, to tell the truth, you really are the sweetest little girl in the world, and I like you ever and ever so much—'pon my word I do." And, pressing my hand to his lips, he turns quickly and strides away in the moonlight.

"Well, Ethel," says Clare, sleepily, as I enter her dimly-lighted room, "did you have a nice time?"

"Yes," I answer, softly, glancing admiringly in the mirror at my flushed cheeks and shining eyes, and wondering whether I looked so very pretty out in the moonlight as I do now. "Yes, I had a very nice time indeed."

"Did you dance very often?" continued Clare, lazily.

"The brush with which I am smoothing my dusky tresses falls to the floor with a crash. The moonlight walk fades away, and all my anger and wounded pride come back with all their bitterness.

"I didn't dance at all," I answer, bursting into tears; and, throwing myself down beside Clare, I wind my arms around her neck and sob myself to sleep.

The following morning Clare and I are seated in the breakfast-room, idling our time away over our coffee, when the door opens, and our little maid enters, carrying a beautiful bouquet.

"Oh, Fannie," I cry, springing to my feet with outstretched hands, "is it for me? Who brought it?"

"A little boy, ma'am," answers Fanny, with a significant smile.

"Oh, Clare, see these lovely hyacinths," I cry, taking them over to her. "I wonder who sent them?"

"Here is a card," says Clare, drawing a tiny piece of pasteboard from its nest among the roses.

We both bend our heads to examine it.

"Miss Verner. With the compliments of Hugh Avondale."

"Miss Verner!" I repeat, with scornful emphasis. "I wonder if he doesn't know we are twins?"

"Let us draw straws to see who shall have it," suggests Clare, mischievously.

But I fancy I see a wistful tenderness in her sweet blue eyes.

"Well, Clare," I say, trying to speak cheerfully, "you are fifteen minutes older than I, so of course you are Miss Verner; I am sure he intended them for you."

"Do you really think so?" asks Clare, taking them, with a little blush crimsoning her pretty face.

"I really do," I answer, solemnly; but my conscience gives a sharp twinge, and I walk hastily over to the window, my own face growing guiltily warm.

About an hour later, while Clare is out giving French lessons, I fancy that my little flower garden needs some attention, and, after arraying myself in an airy, slightly soiled wrapper, with my dark hair coiled in a loose and unbecoming knot at the back of my head, and a huge white straw hat shading my face, I saunter out among the flowers and butterflies, and, sinking ungracefully down on one knee before a flower-bed begin to ruthlessly tear up the poor innocent weeds.

But I never could work on such a dear, delicious summer morning, and presently I throw down my weeding-fork in disgust, and, sitting under a large tree, with my hat tipped over my eyes to ward off the flickering sunbeams, I lose myself in a pleasant reverie.

I don't know how it happens, but very soon Hugh Avondale wanders into my dreams, and I begin to wonder whether he really cares for Claudia Neilson, and whether Clare cares for him, etc.

"But how can she care for him?" I ask myself,

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almost angrily. "She has only seen him once. And yet she blushes every time his name is mentioned."

"Well, Miss Ethel, are you indulging in a day-dream?" suddenly calls out a gay, familiar voice from the gate.

I give a violent start and look around, but can see nothing for my hideous hat, and in another moment Hugh is beside me.

"You look so cool and comfortable under this dear old tree," he begins, apologetically, "that I could not resist the temptation of coming in."

"I stammer some silly reply, with my heart beating so swiftly and loudly I am afraid he will hear it. What is there in those dark, laughing eyes that always makes me blush and feel so confused?

It cannot be that I am falling in love with him. I have only seen him four times. And yet what means this strange thrill down in my heart? Ah, it is a mystery that, though strange, is very sweet.

"How nice you look this morning," remarks Mr. Avondale, sitting down beside me and bending his head to peer laughingly under the hat into my blushing face. "I would give ten shillings for your picture in that costume."

"How generous you are," I retort, ironically. "But if you are going to laugh at me I shall go home."

"I am not laughing at you," he declares, eagerly. "I was only teasing you. You are a great deal too pretty to be laughed at."

Instantly my face, which was just beginning to cool, flushes again at this bold compliment.

"I wish you would not say such things to me," I cry, in a distressed voice. "I am not pretty—and I know I am not—and I don't like you to say so."

"But you are pretty," he declares, taking my hand in spite of my efforts to the contrary, and refusing to release it, "and a great deal sweater than you are pretty; and if you're angry I can't help it."

"I am not angry," I answer, drawing my hat over my eyes, "but I'm afraid—"

"Afraid of what?" queries Hugh, with a slight pressure of my hand.

"I'm afraid you think you can say anything you choose to me," I conclude with a little sob.

It is difficult to say what his answer would have been. From the sudden and tight clasp he gave my hand, I think it would have been a rather demonstrative one; but before he can reply the gate shuts with a little click, and Clare comes slowly up the walk, singing softly to herself, and evidently unaware of our visitation.

I withdraw my hand abruptly, and not a moment too soon either, for I think there is a suspicion in my sister's clear eyes as she comes gracefully across the lawn to us. Oh, why cannot I always look as sweet and graceful and cool—as perfectly lady-like and self-possessed as Clare?

How pretty she looks as she shakes hands with Hugh, and then sits down on the grass beside us, and fans herself gently with her hat. Looking up suddenly, she catches Hugh's eyes fixed admiringly upon her, and instantly her snowy eyelids droop over the clear, azure orbs, and the long, dark, curling lashes rest on the fair, pink cheek. There is no use denying it—I am madly, passionately jealous of my sister Clare.

It is a calm, hazy September evening. Soft, golden-edged clouds float over the blue sky, and a fragrant breeze is kissing the flowers—a breeze so fresh and pure that one feels sure its original home must have been in some far away, paridisiacal island in a southern sea. A calm, pure stillness is floating through the air, and Hugh and I are sitting in the darkening parlour, waiting for Clare to return from her walk.

Three months have been laid away in the vault of time since that sweet twilight evening when I first saw Hugh in the churchyard, and the sweet, involuntary passion I felt for him then has grown into the purest, deepest love of my life. But, alas, Clare loves him also, and all this

short, golden summer my happiness has been mingled with pain.

"Ethel," Hugh says, with a sudden tenderness in his voice, as he takes my unresisting hand in his, "I don't believe I can wait till to-morrow for your answer, after all. Can't you tell me now, darling?"

"What answer?" I ask, shyly, though my heart tells me what he is going to say.

"You received my bouquet and note this morning, did you not?" asks Hugh, reproachfully. "Do not trifle with me, Ethel."

"I never received any note from you, Hugh," I declare, earnestly; "and every bouquet you sent here was directed to 'Miss Verner' and I always thought they were for Clare."

"Good heavens!" cries Hugh, passionately. "What an idiot I have been. I put a note in that bouquet, Ethel, telling you to wear a white rose in your hair to church to-morrow if you would be my wife. And, oh, heavens!" he cries, remorsefully, "I did not call you Ethel once. She will think it is intended for her."

"And she loves you, Hugh," I sob, burying my face in my hands. "She told me she was going to wear a white rose in her hair tomorrow."

"Oh, my darling," Hugh cries, taking me in his arms, "you love me, and we would have been so happy together. But now—oh, beloved, I cannot give you up," he cries, pressing passionate kisses upon my burning lips.

"And why should you give her up, Hugh?" asks a low, sweet voice behind us, and Clare comes through the open window, looking, in her white dress, like a being from another and fairer world. "I do love you, Hugh," she continues, gently, coming and standing before us, "but I dare say" (with a little laugh that is full of pain), "I dare say it will not kill me, and I will soon learn to give you a sister's love. Only—" and now, in spite of her pride a little sob escapes her lips—"would you mind going away for a while? It is rather hard just now, you know. Oh, Hugh, Hugh!"

And now, with all her pride gone, she clasps her hands with a little quivering, broken cry, and sinks down at our feet unconscious.

It is June—sweet, pleasure-bringing June, with its long, cloudless days and balmy evenings. It is just a year to-night since I sat on Deacon Stubbs's tombstone and wished I were dead—a long, dreary, unhappy year—and to-night I am sitting in the twilight, and once again death is in my thoughts. But it is not of my own death I am thinking, but of my sister's. Yes, dear reader, Clare is dying—my pretty, proud, graceful Clare. Before another sunset comes with its calmness and fragrance, Clare will have

Gone through the straight and dreadful pass of death, and I shall be all alone.

"If I could only see Hugh once more before I go," she said to me yesterday, with her gentle smile, patient even in death. "It would be so much easier for me to leave you. If I could only give you to him, little sister, I would be so happy, for I know he would take better care of you than I have. It is so hard to leave you all alone, Ethel, but," she added, softly, folding her thin, white hands, and lifting her eyes reverently, "Heaven's will be done!"

Very slowly and patiently Clare is dying. She has consumption, the doctors say, but I do not believe them. Oh, how I have suffered all these long months as I watched her fading away, and knowing that I am the cause.

Yet never a word or glance of reproach does she give me. Nothing but love and patience falls from her lips. Oh, how often have I wished that she would hate me, curse me, even threaten me any way, rather than with such loving kindness.

If she could only live until Hugh comes. For yesterday, when she said she wished to see him, I went to his solicitor without her cognizance, and begged him to send for Hugh, wherever he was.

Not once, since he went away last September, have I received a single letter from my lover.

I do not even know his address, for he left me in anger because I would not promise to marry him.

"I love you, Hugh," I told him; "but as long as Clare loves you I will not marry you."

I always loved my sister more than myself, always thought of her happiness before my own, and I will not, by one selfish act, rob her life of this one little ray of sunshine. And oh, I am glad to-night that I did not yield to his wishes. Heaven knows how strong was the temptation, but I thank Heaven for giving me strength to resist it.

"Ethel," Clare says to me, softly, as she turns her white face on the pillow and looks at me with her great, blue, beseeching eyes, "I wish you would draw back the curtains. Do not refuse me," she pleads, as I hesitate, for the doctors have forbidden me to let any light into the room, "for little sister, I must see one more sunset before I go. Please, Ethel, draw them back, and open the window wide."

Choking with tears I comply with the request. All the golden glory of the setting sun fills the room with radiant beauty. Little whiffs of fragrance float in from the flowers out in the garden—the flowers that Clare planted with her own slender fingers, and nursed into beauty and strength with her loving attention.

Down at the foot of the lawn the river sweeps by with a low, clear murmur. Clare loves so well, and, watching her as she lies with folded hands and a peaceful smile parting her lips, she looks so happy that I almost wish I were in her place.

Heaven forgive me, but I believe I would willingly die if I could feel—as I am sure Clare feels—that I was going to a better world than this. Suddenly the little gate clicks sharply, and firm, quick steps come up the avenue. Oh, those steps. How well I remember them. I start to my feet, my face flushing and my heart throbbing wildly.

"I am so glad," Clare says, softly. "I knew Heaven would send him, Ethel."

I kiss her tenderly, then hasten down the stairs. Hugh is standing at the open door waiting for me, with the old expression of love and tenderness in his dear eyes.

"Ethel," he cries, joyfully, coming to meet me. "Oh, my darling, I thought you were ill."

"Oh, Hugh, Hugh!" I sob, throwing myself in his arms in a wild burst of weeping. "It is Clare—my poor, pretty Clare, who is dying."

Hugh draws me closer to his heart, and holds me there in a close embrace until my grief has spent itself.

"My poor Ethel," he murmurs, softly stroking my restless head. "I have been so angry with you, and you were true to me all the time."

Before I can answer the housekeeper comes hastily down the stairs and calls me; then I remember Clare, and, clinging to Hugh's arm, I take him up to the quiet room where my sister lies dying. A sudden flood of joy rushes over her white face as her eyes rest on Hugh's face, and she reaches out her hands to him as gladly and trustingly as a child. Hugh kneels down by the bed with tears in his dark eyes.

"My dear Clare," he says, tenderly. "I am so glad you came before it was too late, Hugh," she answers, softly, watching him with eager, loving eyes. "I want you to do something to please me before I die—will you?"

"I will do anything in my power, dear Clare," replies Hugh, gently.

"And you, Ethel," she continues, turning to me; "will you promise to do what I wish?"

I bow my head, but cannot speak for tears.

"Then," she cries, joyfully, "I want to see you Hugh's wife before I leave you. Do not, oh, do not refuse, Ethel!" she cries, pleadingly, as I draw back, flushing crimson, "for this is what I have been waiting and praying for. You are willing, are you not, Hugh?" she asks, laying her hand on his.

"Heaven knows I am more than willing. Little sister," Hugh answers, kissing her hand. "Ethel," he adds, rising and taking my

trembling hand in his, "shall it be as Clare wishes?"

I don't know just what I answer, but, at any rate, half an hour later I am standing beside Hugh at Clare's bedside, and Mr. Gray, the rector, is uttering the words that will bind us together for life.

I scarcely hear a word the minister says—my thoughts are wandering on other things. The sun is still lingering at the top of the mountain, as if waiting for Clare, and its softened rays resting caressingly on her fair sweet face. I can hear the river rushing noisily along between its green banks, and the far-distant chimes of the evening church-bells.

And, standing here, with my hand clasped in Hugh's, another scene rises before my eyes, and I see myself seated on a fallen tombstone in the quiet churchyard—the churchyard where Clare will soon lie, with slender, folded hands, and waxen lids drooping over the clear, tender eyes—alone in the twilight, wishing I were dead. Just a year; and now, before the sun sets, I will be Hugh's wife, and Clare—sweet, pretty Clare—will be in Heaven.

It is all over now? Hugh has taken me in his arms and kissed me, and together we turn to the sofa; but Clare is already on the verge of eternity. Faintly she smiles, and stretches out her hands. Hugh lifts her gently in his arms, and presses his lips to her pure brow. Her head, with all its pretty golden coils, falls back on his shoulder, and Clare passes through the Golden Gates, into the beautiful City of Light. Truly, her first pure love was given, "not wisely, but too well."

E. R.

FACETIA.

A WAY TO ACQUIRE KNOWLEDGE.

JUGSON (digging): "What am I a-goin' to plant 'ere, miss?—why 'taters; the werry roots, as Sir Walter Rally—him wot fust made 'bacca—linvented three hundred years ago."

YOUNG LADY: "Why, you are quite an educated man, Jugson."

JUGSON: "And I did ought to be, miss, 'cos I onst used to sweep out a school-house for a livin'." —Fun.

TAKING IT OFF.

TICKET-HOLDER (in a Co-operative Society, showing ticket to shopman in one of the affiliated houses of business): "I believe you allow twopence in the shilling to members of the New Civil Service Housekeepers' Co-operative Society?"

SHOPMAN: "Yes, sir; but we don't allow it on less than one shilling."

TICKET-HOLDER (whose purchase came to ten-pence): "Oh, very well. Give me a twopenny pencil, that'll make it square." —Fun.

HOW TO KNOW THEM.

Signs of a good Liberal. That he can't bear the sight of a parrot, because it's Beaky.

That he never opens his Macaulay, because it's also his Tory.

That he always patronises the pit of a theatre for fear of being put into some scientific front-tier.

That he looks guilty while purchasing his "Funny Folks" at the First Lord of the Admiralty's bookstall.

That he always prefers a glass of ale to a gin-go."

That he never carries Vesuvians, and always refuses to help the blind across the road, lest he should be mistaken for a "man of lights and leading."

That he always says "So I think;" not "I be-Levy, my boy."

Signs of a Bad Tory.

That he likes to wait until he becomes Dizzy.

That he makes it a point to be hen-pecked, for fear people should take him for a Home Ruler.

That he loses his temper on system, so that he may be Cross.

That he is abstemious in liquors, lest he should be twitted with his (s) Whiggery.

That he has disinherited his only son, because the lad was once "struck by a Bright idea."

That he reveres his literary spinster aunt, whom he regards as an Old True Blue-stockting.

That he doesn't mind Zulus being killed, but objects to the slaughter of a much inferior tribe, the Macdermott-entots. —Funny Folks.

MYSTERIC LUXURY.

MOTHER: "Now, Joe, 'ere's yer tea."

JOE: "I don't want no tea. I bin havin' dinner with a horsey toff what I give a tip to?"

MOTHER: "Lor, Joe! What did ye have?"

JOE: "I dunno. Somethin' jolly nice, though. They called it Tarble Dote!"

FUNNY FOLKS.

A POLITICAL CONSCIENCE.

INDIGENT PATRIOT (to Foreman of "sandwich" men): "I've got no fault to find with the pay; but I'd sooner starve than make a sandwich of my principles."

—Punch.

AVAUT.

FREE-KIRK DIVINE (of advanced opinions, who has recently introduced an organ into his chapel): "I'm sorry to hear, Mrs. McCrawley, that you are by no means so regular in your attendance."

FAIR BREGGIE (indignant at the pastor's latest iniquity): "Kirk, indeed! Wud ye luurre me toe Rome wi' the rest o' them, wi' your origins an' anthonies an' such like abominations? Na, na, until ye gie me Auld Hunder' again without the whistles, I'll tak' ma' speeritual comfort at hame."

—Punch.

WE PARTED LONG AGO.

We parted long ago, my friend,
And thought to meet no more;
We did not think the future held
A blessing then in store.
The last farewell was spoken low,
Amid the weeping tears,
We thought our hope had flown away
Beyond the reach of years.

We parted long ago, my friend,
And now with me look back
To where we bid the last adieu,
Then view the dreary track;
It came before our vision there,
To haunt us in each dream,
And makes us sad in waking hours,
No joy to intervene.

We parted long ago, my friend,
But now the trouble's o'er,
For I can meet you face to face
And clasp your hand once more;
Do not forget the day gone by,
And he who doth restore
The lost unto the fold again,
And bids us weep no more.

M. V.

A LECTURE on sea and land in relation to geological time was recently delivered before the Royal Institution, by Dr. William B. Carpenter, F.R.S. The lecturer mentioned the results of the "Challenger" expedition, and said they induced a doubt in his mind as to whether, according to the received view, all land now existing had once been under water, and every part of the sea-bottom had once been land. He thought the evidence was in favour of the permanence, throughout geological time, of the framework of the present continents and oceanic basins.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

STOUT.—Stout is only a stronger form of porter. It is extensively brewed in London, Dublin, and elsewhere. Good draught stout contains an ounce and a half of alcohol in the pint.

STAFFORDSHIRE SYLLABUB.—Put a pint of cider into a bowl with a glassful of brandy, four table-spoonfuls of sugar, and half a grated nutmeg. Fill the bowl with frothed new milk, or with milk heated till it is new-milk-warm. Pour this into the syllabub from a teapot held high above it.

SPRING SOUP or Hor-Tops.—Early in spring gather some hop-tops; tie them up in small bundles, let them soak in fresh water, and boil them in some good stock slightly thickened with lentils or peas and flavoured with onions, herbs, pepper, and salt. Simmer the vegetables till tender; then place some sippets in a tureen, lay the bundles of hop-tops upon them, and pour the potage over all.

SUMMER DIET.—With change of weather all sensible people change their diet. In summer fish should replace meat both at breakfast and luncheon, while fresh salads and well-cooked fruit should be taken instead of indigestible pastry and in nutritious confections. Milk and water may be taken by children and young people up to eighteen years of age, or, for those who prefer it, the milk may be combined with some natural mineral water. No more powerful stimulant should be taken than claret or sherry by those who feel they must have something more than water, while they who are wise will adopt the most simple form of diet, and avoid all unnatural extremes.

MISCELLANEOUS.

THE men have a new plaything. It is a perfume-case. The knob represents a Chinese magot or an Indian idol; then press a spring and a spray of scented issues from the mouth.

THE elections have been good for the photographers. Of one Conservative candidate we wot of no less than 5,000 portraits have been ordered for distribution among the free and independent.

THE 15th inst. promises to be a red-letter day for Hertfordshire Society. Her Royal Highness the Princess Christian intends to take part, as an executant, in a grand musical soirée, to be given on that occasion in the Town Hall of Rickmansworth.

THE Prince and Princess of Wales will visit Cornwall on the 20th May next. Their Royal Highnesses will be the guests of Lord Viscount Falmouth at Tregothnan.

A TOURIST with a desire for useful knowledge visited the ruins of Pompeii. The cicerone explained to him the manner in which the city perished. "At what date?" he asked. The cicerone avowed his ignorance. The tourist reflected. "It must have been Ash Wednesday," he said.

IT is said that it is probable this will be the last University boat-race from Putney to Mortlake. The reason given is the serious difference which the crews had with the Thames authorities this year.

THE luminous paint seems to be making way. The Underground Railway uses a carriage rendered self-luminous by being painted with it. The Midland have ordered an experimental carriage of the same kind.

THE joint income of the affianced couple who are to become Baron and Baroness Rammingen is said to amount to no more than £5,000 a year, a comfortable sum, perhaps, but still not a large one to maintain a Royal state upon. Had Bismarck chosen to disgorge the loot of the Hanoverian kingdom, the Princess Frederica would have been the richest heiress in Europe. The Baron, as a naturalised English subject, will be able to hold a Court appointment, and it is not unlikely that he will soon have one given to him.

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NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

[In our next issue (No. 886) will be commenced a new serial story, entitled, "Cecil's Fortune."]

A. N.—If your grandfather dies without making a will and leaving a child (your mother) she can claim all his personal property. If your grandfather wishes you to have the furniture on his decease he should give it to you by deed of gift.

T. R. T.—The application of the following lotion will restore your grey hair to its original colour: Take of superacetate of lead, fifteen grains; milk of sulphur, forty-five grains; glycerine, half ounce; rose water, four ounces. Mix, and apply with a soft brush.

ALICE D.—Involuntary blushing is caused by a weakness in the circulation of the blood; take tonic medicines. The only way of overcoming bashfulness is to go a good deal into company.

POSEMAN.—The fact of your being in Government employ disqualifies you from voting at the election of Members of Parliament.

M. H.—Ink spots may be removed by oxalic or nitric acid.

MISCHIEVE CHERRIE.—1. An ordinary knowledge of arithmetic is alone required, which, doubtless, you already possess. 2. Handwriting very good indeed. 3. We make no charge for our advice.

KARA ALI.—Double your income, and add at least four years to your age, before you seriously entertain any matrimonial views. The intermediate time may be very pleasantly occupied in honest labour and looking out for a desirable partner. Marriage without courtship is a blind-man's-buff sort of game. Courtship is the holiday time of youth—a probation necessary and healthful to the future man and wife.

JESSIE writes that she has got into a deal of trouble with a friend just by speaking a few thoughtless words to a gossiping companion. We have no doubt that her friend will forgive her, but as she is not solitary in that respect, she, as well as others, should commit the following lines to memory:

"If you your lips
Would keep from slips,
Five things observe with care:
Of whom you speak,
To whom you speak,
And how, and when, and where."

E. P. T.—You served the fellow rightly, and he well deserved the thrashing you gave him. The scoundrel who to gratify a mean revenge could basely slander an innocent and virtuous girl would meet with little sympathy at the hands of a magistrate. Why did you not let him summons you? After having acted a manly part to the slanderer do not act an unmanly one to his victim. If you are convinced of her innocence why break off the engagement? It is your duty to defeat his malice by showing how much you despise it.

AMBROISE.—You have been rightfully punished for enticing a girl into clandestine correspondence. Parents naturally suspect young men who sneak in at the area or back door. Go to them and apologise for the indiscretion.

LILY.—You have acted very imprudently. You introduce strangers into your father's house during his absence, and he, arriving home unexpectedly, very properly turns them out. It seems to us that the two "college students" are a brace of idlers.

A. L.—If your parents knew of your correspondence, and approved it, there was no harm in writing to the young man. As matters now stand it is his place to write to you if he wishes to continue the correspondence with you.

W. S.—We do not think much of anonymous letters. As a rule, they are to be torn up without a second thought. In your case it would be fair to the gentleman to give him an opportunity of seeing them.

NOTICE.

FOR THE FUTURE, COMMENCING WITH OUR NEXT NUMBER (886),

OUR "READER" WILL CONTAIN

TWO COMPLETE ILLUSTRATED STORIES,

Replete with Incidents and of Thrilling Interest.

ALSO FOUR SERIAL TALES, ETC., ETC.

CARRIE, LIZZIE, and BEATA, three friends, would like to correspond with three gentlemen. Carrie is twenty-one, tall, dark hair and eyes, fond of music and children. Lizzie is twenty-two, medium height, brown hair, dark blue eyes, fond of home. Beata is eighteen, black hair and eyes, fond of home, music, and children.

MAKE PLAIN SAIL AND HANDS TO BATHE, two seamen in the Royal Navy, would like to correspond with two young ladies between twenty and twenty-two.

CARRIE and LOUISA, two friends, wish to correspond with two gentlemen. Carrie is twenty, medium height, fair, fond of music and dancing. Louisa is eighteen, dark hair, good-looking, fond of music and children. Respondents must be about twenty-four.

"THE COT BY THE SEA."

There's a little brown cottage
Stands close by the sea,
And a fair little maiden
That waits there for me;
And where'er I wander,
O'er land or o'er sea,
There is one faithful heart
That is waiting for me.

How well I remember
The cot by the sea,
Where my golden-haired darling
Gave her promise to me
To be constant and faithful
What'er should befall
And when I returned
I would make her my bride.

I gained golden treasure,
And bright jewels rare,
To twine in the tresses
Of my bride's golden hair.
My heart thrills with rapture,
And soon I shall see
The little brown cot
And the maid who loves me.

I see the brown cottage,
With its wide open door,
But the dear, smiling face
I will never see more.
They tell me she waited
Until hope fled away,
Then the golden head drooped
And the grave claimed its prey.

"Oh, tell him," she murmured,
"I am waiting him there,
In the land of bright promise
'Mid the angels so fair,
Where partings and death
Are for ever unknown;
I'll meet him in Heaven,
I'll meet him, my own."

Darling's gone to her rest;
I am left all alone
In the little brown cottage
Near the sea's sullen moan.
I am weary and heart-sore,
And longing to see
My pure spirit bride
Who is waiting for me.

Where'er I wander,
O'er land or o'er sea,
I know that in Heaven
Darling's waiting for me.
Waiting and watching,
Ever thinking of me,
In the bright home above
Darling's waiting for me.

J. W. E.

LILLIAN B., eighteen, light hair, blue eyes, of a loving disposition, fond of home and music, would like to correspond with a young man about twenty-two, fond of home and music, tall, dark.

SARAH and ELLEN, two domestics, would like to correspond with two young men with a view to matrimony. Sarah is nineteen, dark hair, blue eyes, good-tempered, of a loving disposition. Ellen is twenty-one, medium height, loving, fond of children.

JEANNIE and MARY, two friends, would like to correspond with two gentlemen with a view to matrimony. Jeannie is nineteen, light brown hair, blue eyes, good-looking. Mary is eighteen, light brown hair, blue eyes, handsome. Respondents must be tall, dark, and fond of children.

PET OF THE MESS, twenty-one, tall, good-looking, and fond of children, would like to correspond with a young lady.

CAROLINE, twenty-two, dark, medium height, loving, fond of music and dancing, would like to correspond with a gentleman about twenty-four.

G. D. and F. C., two friends, would like to correspond with two young men. G. D. is seventeen, dark hair and eyes, medium height, good-looking. F. C. is seventeen, good-looking.

F. F., thirty-four, would like to correspond with a lady or widow about the same age with a view to matrimony.

HARRY, tall, dark, blue eyes, would like to correspond with a young lady about seventeen.

MARGARETTE, twenty-one, tall, would like to correspond with a gentleman.

VERNON'S RELAY and SHUTTER APPARATUS, two seamen in the Royal Navy, wish to correspond with two young ladies. Vernon's Relay is twenty-three, medium height, good-looking, of a loving disposition. Shutter Apparatus is twenty-two, tall, of a loving disposition, medium eyes.

MOLECULE and ATOM, would like to correspond with two young ladies. Molecule is twenty-two, blue eyes, medium height, fond of music. Atom is twenty-one, dark, good-looking.

CLARA, nineteen, medium height, fair, domesticated, fond of home and children, would like to correspond with a gentleman with a view to matrimony. Respondent must be about twenty-three, good-looking.

HARRIET and JESSIE, two friends, would like to correspond with two seamen in the Royal Navy with a view to matrimony. Harriet is twenty-three, medium height, Jessie is of a loving disposition, fond of home, tall, fair, domesticated.

MAGGIE, HANNAH, and POLLY, three friends, would like to correspond with three young gentlemen with a view to matrimony. Maggie is twenty-two, dark, hazel eyes, medium height, good-tempered. Hannah is twenty-two, tall, dark, of a loving disposition, fond of home and music. Polly is nineteen, fair, blue eyes, medium height, loving, fond of music and children. Respondents must be between twenty and twenty-five.

COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED:

ELIZA C. is responded to by—W. A., twenty-three, of medium height, dark, fond of music and dancing.

WALTER by—M. C., dark, medium height, and fond of home.

LAURA by—Fred, twenty-four, medium height.

TARLINGTON by—Rosy, seventeen, dark, of a loving disposition, hazel eyes.

WALTER by—C. S., nineteen, dark hair, hazel eyes, and of a loving disposition.

HARRY by—A. B., eighteen, tall, dark hair, blue eyes, good-tempered, of a loving disposition.

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